# THE WISDOM OF THE ARYAS

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# THE WISDOM OF THE ARYAS

*Uniform with this volume*

THE MESSAGE OF BUDDHISM: "The Buddha"; "The Doctrine"; "The Order."

By SUBHADRA BHIKKHU.

Edited by J. E. ELLAM. 1922.

Sabbadānam Dhammadānam Jināti
(*The Gift of Truth excels all other Gifts*)

# THE WISDOM OF THE ARYAS

BY
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## DEDICATION

## TO CLIFFORD BAX, ESQ.

*Dear Friend,*

*When, during the earlier and terrible years of the Great War, I came to London, broken in health and despairing of further possibility of work for the cause to which my life has been devoted, it was your unprecedented kindness which made possible the resumption of my life-work. Secondly, it was you who inspired and organised the delivery of the series of lectures which forms the bulk of the present volume. If, then, I dedicate to you this first-fruits of my work as published in a western land, it is as a memento of a two-fold service which is beyond repayment; and in token of a heartfelt gratitude which will surely continue as long as my life shall last.*

*ANANDA M.*

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# INTRODUCTION

The six essays constituting the bulk of the present work were written during the winter of 1917-18, at the instigation of that friend to whom this book is dedicated ; and were delivered in lecture form to a private audience at his studio. Since the question of Transmigration,—always one of the most difficult of Buddhist teachings to make clear to the western mind,—was dealt with but briefly in the original series, there has been added a separate paper on this subject, originally delivered at a meeting of the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

In presenting this work to the consideration of the thinking public, some words of explanation, alike as to its object and as to the author's claim to speak for Buddhism are necessary. Its object, briefly put, is to endeavour to indicate, to that large section of the cultured world who are weary of agnosticism, and yet unable by virtue of their culture itself to accept any of the various presentations of Christian belief, the little-known fact that we have, in the Teaching of the greatest of the Indian Sages, a system of religious truth capable of solving many of those deep problems about life which face our

western world to-day; and that untrammelled by any of those unprovable dogmas or claims to blind belief which characterise all the manifold forms of Christian teaching. It is the profound conviction of the author, indeed, that without some widespread movement in the direction of that conquest of Individualism which constitutes the central feature of the Buddha's Teaching, the modern civilisation of the western world is of a necessity self-doomed to destruction.

Of the author's claim to speak authoritatively on behalf of what Buddhism actually is and teaches, it will only be necessary to explain, with due apologies for the intrusion of such personal matter, that, profoundly impressed with the views above detailed as to the value of Buddhism to the western world, he entered the Buddhist Monastic Order at Akyab in Burma some twenty odd years ago; with the object of obtaining an inside knowledge of the teaching, so as later to be able to present it to the west. In that Order, in Akyab, Mandalay, Ceylon, and later (and principally) in Rangoon, he spent some fourteen years; becoming in due course a *Thera* or Elder of the Order; and only, indeed, finally quitting the monastic life when compelled to do so by the complete breakdown of his health*. In Rangoon, with the aid and co-operation of several devoted and far-seeing Buddhists, he founded the *Buddhasasana Samagama* or International Buddhist Society; a body which published a number of pamphlets on the

* There are, it may be explained, no life-long vows permitted in the Buddhist Monastic Order, any member of which is at liberty to leave it at any time. A Monk becomes an Elder when he has spent ten full years in the Order.

religion, and produced six numbers of a Review called *Buddhism,* which was widely distributed amongst the public libraries in Great Britain and other English-speaking lands. This Review was edited, and in large part written by the author; who likewise took a prominent part in the formation of the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

For these reasons the author may perhaps claim for the present work an unique position amongst the vast number already extant on Buddhism. If we except the invaluable translations from the Buddhist Scriptures, mainly the result of the devoted work of Dr. and Mrs. Rhys Davids, the bulk of the vast literature on Buddhism has been the work either of Christian missionaries whose object was naturally to place Buddhism in as unpleasant a light as possible (which means that they badly misrepresented it), or of non-Buddhist lay scholars of the west, who at the best were regarding the subject from the outside; their works the result of the study of Buddhist literary origins rather than of Buddhism as a living religion. One or two previous works, indeed, have been published by lay Buddhists*, but the present volume is, so far as the writer's knowledge goes, the first work published in England written by a former Elder of the Buddhist Order.

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Reverting to the object which prompted the initiation of the Buddhist movement in this country, in general, and the publication of this work in par-

* As, for example, *The Message of Buddhism*, by Capt. J. E. Ellam,—the first member of the present series.

ticular, it is necessary here to attempt some justification of the three claims above set forth ;—that Buddhism alone is capable of subserving the religious needs of the western world to-day ; that it, and it alone amongst the great religions, is competent to bring about the cure of the growing individualism of the age ; and that without such reduction of individualism, the modern civilisation is self-doomed to perish ; as, under closely similar conditions, has perished the civilisation of Rome and many another in the bye-gone years.

To take these in order, let us consider what is the underlying and fundamental reason for that failure of the ideas and ideals about religion which inspired our forbears :—a failure so lamentably manifested by the fact that twenty centuries of Christianity have not sufficed to prevent the most cruel and terrible calamity that the individualistic greed of man ever in history has succeeded in inflicting upon himself :—the Great War, from the effects of which the whole of the western culture still is reeling.

The distinctive feature of the modern western culture, and the ultimate dictator of modern thought is that physical science, which in the course of the past two centuries has so wonderfully altered all the conditions of our human life. That it is which has made us what we are, as distinct from the conditions of our forefathers' times ; that it is which has given us our control over the forces of nature ; that it is, unhappily, which has armed us, first for the enslavement and even the destruction of many an alien race and nation ; and, more latterly,—in the course of the inevitable working of the moral law,—against

ourselves. And the reason for the failure of the old-time teachings which sufficed our forbears is that the nature of the world about us as exhibited by the investigations of modern science is utterly incompatible, alike to heart and to mind, with those early ideas and beliefs.

For the old teachings represented life and the universe as being the resultant of the arbitrary will of a divine Being, whose will and action our forbears saw in all the great phenomena of nature, whether in the heavens or on earth. By that wonder-working will, they thought, the heavenly bodies moved in their appointed orbits ; at its behest the Sun rose daily, bringing light and life to all on earth ; by its fiat the clouds poured down their fertilising rain. From its wrath at man's misdeeds came pestilence and famine to decimate mankind ; and the earthquake and the flood to destroy or to engulph his too presumptuous buildings. In all the great phenomena of nature and of life the infant minds of the western world perceived the action of that mighty Will ; and conceived even the hearts and minds of men to be the scene of a continuous conflict between that Will and an evil and opposed one which somehow, inscrutably, Omnipotence permitted to exist to the misery and the destruction of the weaker of mankind.

To our forbears, this conception of an *Anima*, a living and an omnipotent Will behind all the phenomena of nature, was a very real and immediate thing ; and the teachings of the Church,—or, later, the individual interpretation of the translated Greek and Hebrew scriptures,—were literally and actually

held by them as the inspired word of that supreme Being whose operations they envisaged in all that went to form their life. But when, with growing intelligence, men came to really *study* the phenomena of nature, they found that in every direction in which they were able to investigate, those phenomena were the result of the operation of certain underlying *laws*. So long as science was the study of but a few, this made but little difference to western thought at large ; but now that, by reason of its ever-widening applications, science is becoming more and more widely known, this scientific concept of the Reign of Law is ever more and more widely taking the place of the old-time belief in an arbitrary Will.

And it is in this most fundamental change of viewpoint, so far as our minds, our intellects are concerned, that Buddhism, and Buddhism alone amongst the great religions of the world, is able to withstand the test of comparison with this modern scientific truth. For, as will be shewn in the following pages, Buddhism is *founded* on this concept of the Reign of Law ; and what Newton did for the science of the material world when he demonstrated the existence of the law of gravitation ; that,—and far more,—the Buddha had done twenty-two centuries before for the science of the deeper things of life, when He announced that the characters and destinies of men were likewise rigidly determined by a Causal Law responsible for all the greater conditionings of all we term our life.

Nor is it only in the intellectual sphere that the difficulties we moderns find in the beliefs of our

forefathers reach their solution in this old eastern creed. Our hearts, no less than our minds, revolt from that conception of life, of nature, as the work of an intelligent Will ;—now that we understand and have grown mature enough to dare to face what nature really is. We have learned, through the eyes of science, to regard all life as one continuing struggle ;—a struggle wherein uncounted millions of exquisitely-sensitive creatures are continually subjected to the cruellest and most torturing of deaths. We see Life everywhere arrayed, seemingly in blindness, against itself ; and what our forbears would have termed the " God-given instincts " of its creatures directed against other lives with a cruelty so revolting that our hearts sicken at the very thought of it. Consider, for example, the case of the ' killer-whale,' —the smallest animal of its family ; and the fashion wherein it treats the vastly larger member of its own family,—the huge sperm-whale. Attacking it with continuous blows of its tail ; again and again the killer tries to dislocate the lower jaw of its huge victim by seizing it and pulling it downwards as, with opened mouth, the great creature strives to escape. Often the unequal combat lasts for two or three whole days and nights ; until the great sperm-whale is exhausted, and, despite its former strength, no more can close its mouth against the horrible attack of the ferocious killer. Then, pulling with all its might, the killer succeeds in dislocating the sperm-whale's lower jaw; so that it no more can close its mouth. Then the killer reaps the reward of its long combat ; entering the huge animal's mouth it *eats*

*out its tongue,*—and departs to leave the hapless monster to die in a slow torment of agony and starvation ! Nature is full of just such horrors ;—most men either do not know of them or will not think of what they mean. But to those who think it is very clear that if such abominations are the outcome of a creative effort, then they must have been definitely *thought out and planned* by the intelligence responsible :—there is no possibility of evading the issue. And it is incredible to the really thoughtful man or woman, who so dares look life in the face, that any being even so little compassionate as the average man could, if gifted with omnipotence, devise a scheme of life so bitterly cruel as is this nature we have come a little bit to understand. How much less, then, a Being conceived as omniscient and all-merciful ?

And here again Buddhism supplies us with the nearest possible approach to an understanding. Very far from representing, with the child-like beliefs of our forefathers, the creatures of this ravening torture-house of life as blessing their creator for their continuing agony, it looks life boldly in the face —as should befit a mind grown out of childhood, —and, refusing to be blinded against the facts of existence by specious and speculative dogmas, it places this very suffering of life in the forefront of its doctrinal structure. It shews us how no mighty self-willed Being, incarnate of all cruelty, is responsible for all this mass of suffering : but simply *Desire,*—the craving thirst for life enselfed ; pitiless, having no care if all the universe shall perish, so long

as Self shall live. And it goes on to shew us how the end of this so horribly conditioned life, the passing on to life's Fruition beyond the universe, can follow only on the suppression,—or rather on the nobler transmutation,—of that same Desire for Self into an unconditioned love and pity for all life.

To pass, now, to the questions of the danger threatening our civilisation; and of the manner wherein the spread of Buddhist ideals might subvert this. When we compare the conditions of our present age with those, say, of the decline of Rome (as that of which we know the most), the thoughtful student of history cannot but be struck with the extraordinary similarity between the conditionings of the two great epochs. It will be well, however, if, before we pass on to consider these similarities in detail, and to deduce how far the parallelism is likely to proceed, we should turn back to fundamentals, with a view to ascertaining the causation of the dissolution of great civilisations in general.

All higher forms of life of which we know arise from the putting-together, in some peculiarly intimate and yet ever-changing way, of a vast number of life-units of a far lower order. This, of course, is from the material standpoint; but it cannot be too often said that whatever set of conditions we may find in the material world must be the exact parallel of those prevailing in the spiritual or mental world:—since both are but different aspects of the one same Life; even as the north-seeking and south-seeking polarities are inseparable aspects of the one same magnetism. And we select the material view-point because our

knowledge from that standpoint very greatly transcends our knowledge of the subtler realm.

From this point of view, then, to give an example, our own human lives may be regarded as arising from the putting-together of the lives of an immense number of far lowlier creatures,—the lives, that is, of the unnumbered cells that go to build up our bodies. Comparative biology shews that the more highly advanced in evolution is any given being, the more highly specialised are the natures and functions of the various types of individual cells which go to the upbuilding of that being's life; and so the degree of specialisation of the cells composing the human body is higher than that of any other creature on earth.

Just as our lives are thus built up of individual cells, so is a great civilisation built up of individual human beings; and here again we find that the more highly-specialised are the functions of the individuals composing it, the more advanced is the resultant civilisation. As we should expect,—the greater being derived from the less,—the similarity between the functions of the various classes of cells composiug our bodies, and of individuals composing a great human culture is extraordinarily close; our bodies having a central government in the higher nervous system which controls, through a network of telegraphic communications, the whole body-corporate; roadways and waterways, in the circulatory and lymphatic systems, through which the necessities of life may reach each humblest cell-unit of the whole; a great storehouse of fuel in the liver; and recent

work on the ductless glands has shewn them even to possess a postal system ; through which molecular parcels of certain potent substances are sent out to, and reach, the cells by which they are required. The similarity is such as to transcend mere analogy ; and leads us to the thought that the perfect human civilisation would be that wherein the functions of the divers types of living cells composing our bodies were most exactly paralleled by the functions of the various types of individual composing the State.

For the protection of our bodies from the countless inimical lives which are so constantly invading them, greedy for the life-wealth they contain, nature has elaborated and specialised, so long before mankind attained the same idea, a militia out of certain types of cell. This militia is constituted by the phagocytes which police each finest ramification of our roadways ; and, as we all know, they fall upon, and, if they can, destroy, any hostile organism that has succeeded in entering our systems.

Now in youth and in the prime of life these phagocytes, these members of our militia, act as though they were inspired with the sole ideal of protecting the higher life of the whole body-corporate ; even sacrificing their own lives by millions in order to repel any serious invasion. But, as old age creeps on, it is as though the old ideals fail ; as though the phagocytes, no longer inspired with that one ideal of protecting the corporate life that animated their predecessors, become selfish, individualistic :—they commence to help themselves from the wealth that ever flows along our road-ways ; grasping what

they can for themselves and neglecting their proper duty, and the result is what we call senile decay; which sooner or later inevitably ends in death;—the death of the whole organism, including of course that of the militia-cells which brought it about.

Let us consider this fact a little; because it is one in which, right at the very roots of our own being, and in that material world wherein our knowledge is greatest, we may find the adumbration of a profound spiritual fact. The reader must pardon, for the sake of greater clarity, the use of terms, applied to the lower cell-life, which really pertain to the mental plane. If we speak, for example, of the 'ideals' of a cell, we must be understood as meaning that dim reaching-out towards consciousness which in the highly-developed human being evolves into an ideal: and so throughout in what immediately follows.

Life of the higher order, as known to us, only comes into being by virtue of the symbiosis, the perfect mutual *association* of a number of life-units of a lower order. This, be it observed, is true even of the mere *chemistry* of the vital processes: for Carbon,—the element which forms the foundation of the living molecule,—is the one element most capable of forming great molecular associations, combining with other carbon atoms, as well as atoms of certain other elements, in such great variety of combination that the chemistry of the carbon compounds forms a whole great science in itself. Healthy life of a highly-evolved corporate being consists in this association, in this mutual help and coöperation

of many individual living units : each performing its separate and highly-specialised part in contributing to the higher corporate life. It is as though the individual cells *recognised their unity of purpose* with all other cell-lives of the same association ; and so long as this recognition, this understanding of mutual unity and mutual advantage remains supreme, so long does the higher life remain strong and healthy. So soon, however, as this understanding of the oneness of the life animating all fails in the case of a considerable and an important group,—the above-mentioned ' militia ' cells or phagocytes,—then the life-process of the whole higher being commences to decline ; senility follows, and ends in general death.*

To turn now to life at large. When we survey what we know of life on earth, both past and present, we see Life constantly engaged in what appear to be mere blind experiments. Blindly, as would appear, it worked on earth, evolving first more and more elaborated single cells, each turned against the other ; a ravening microscopic world, vast hordes of whose descendants are still in active being. The first great lesson that Life learned was when it gained the

* One other case is known in the human organism of a similar order to that of the ' militia ' cells. These latter, of course, are *motile* cells, moving in the blood-stream. But occasionally a group of the fixed cells, say muscle-cells, the labourers of the community, similarly fail in their recognition of unity and the supreme importance of the higher life. Instead of continuing to take their appointed part and labour for the association they commence to greedily grasp what they can for themselves ; they proliferate and grow at the cost of the whole organism, instead of working for and with it. And, once started, the process of degeneration spreads to surrounding cells, these becoming infected, as it were, with the bolshevistic individualism of their neighbours. The result is what we term a *malignant tumour* or *cancer* ; which grows, often causing terrible agony to the human being, until some vital part is reached, and so comes death,— by ' individualism ' again !

earliest dim glimmering of its own innate Oneness ; and so commenced to manifest in ever-evolving *associations* of lives, invertebrates, vertebrates,—ever more and more perfect associations, until we reach the reptiles. Then, leaving the water, it came forth on land ; and learned its next great lesson,—again of the value of association, whether in space or time, in the mammalia. In space, as in those orders of mammals that associate for mutual protection ; in time, by virtue of the handing-on of the racial experience by education of the young.

With gradually-evolving intelligence, man later came by slow degrees to bring forth this dim instinctive recognition of the Unity of Life on to the mental plane ; the family aggregating into the clan, the tribe, ultimately into a whole particular race or nation of men. Similarly evolved man's recognition of that unity in time ; and as language grew apace there came into being the first brain-cells, so to speak, of the various races of men, in person of the specialised class of priests and bards ; who gathered and transmitted generation by generation the racial history and mythology. Then writing brought a new immense development to this association in time,—since even the trained memory of man had narrow limits ; whilst the total of the knowledge of even a single tribe was soon far greater than any single human brain could hold. And now humanity has so far advanced that the foremost of its present 'brain-cells,'—the more advanced thinkers of our latter days, are coming ever more and more to grasp the supreme value and importance of this understanding

of Life as One,—at least so far as humanity itself is concerned. Already man is dreaming and planning of the future World-State ; and, indeed, the conquest of science over nature, in giving us the railway, the steamboat, and aeroplane, the telegraph and telephone, has already gone far to obliterate the boundaries of the more civilised nations and races ; and to bring civilised humanity nearer and nearer to coalescence into one vast organisation.

Life's terrible and long-enduring suffering has then arisen,—even as so long ago the Buddha taught mankind,—out of the blind Nescience of itself as One ; out of the not-understanding of this ultimate spiritual fact of existence ; the non-recognition by Life of its underlying unity of purpose and of aim. Ages untold of pain have taught it a little of the value of association ; and the hall-mark of advancing evolution is precisely the extent to which a given group of creatures manifest the highest degree of coördinated association,—in space. With the mammalia and their education of their young, a new and a higher order of association appeared, the association in *time* ; and this foreshadowing of the powers of memory and of thought, becoming at last fully self-conscious, entered upon a new and a higher phase in man, with the development of speech. Life's pain is mitigated just to the extent to which it has achieved this power of association, this practical realisation of its own inherent Oneness. And,—meditating on this lesson taught us even by Life's most material aspect ; by that which constitutes, on the physical side, the very bed-rock of

our nature,—we may glimpse some far dim vision of what our Life of earth may presently achieve; when, in the immensely-distant future, it has learned that lesson thoroughly. We see a world wherein the growing strength and wisdom of mankind, with Life's great lesson consciously realised, will have allowed all the mutually hostile and harmful modes of life to die out by virtue of their very individualism;—a world wherein the whole remaining flora and fauna will coöperate in one perfected symbiosis;—the Life of this world-system, which even now is One in its underlying spiritual reality, become outwardly and physically One in its consciously-guided synthesis.

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Reverting now to the question of the decline of bygone civilisations, the causation of such decline, and the possibility of a similar decline of ours, it is best to take as our example the decline of the Roman culture; alike on account of the similarity that exists between the conditions of the two civilisations in their prime; and because, by reason of its nearness, we know more of the circumstances which attended the decay of Rome than we know in any other case. No student of Roman history can fail to be deeply impressed by the very close parallelism between the conditions prevailing during the decline of Rome, and those that we find apparent in our own modern culture. We observe the same deep-seated and acute antagonism between the classes and the masses; the same antagonism between the sexes; the same

tendency on the part of womankind to compete in all directions with men,—even down to the very detail of the political franchise ; the same tendency to follow after the most bizarre and materialistic forms of superstition that we note in the recent widespread recrudescence of spiritualism. Above all, and ultimately at the back of all these manifestations of instability, we find in both cases the same extensive growth of *individualism,* alike in the material and the mental worlds. In the former, in both cases we see the same tendency towards the accumulation of great wealth in the hands of the few ; with the intensification of the poverty of the many ; in the latter, we find individualism, in place of being regarded as the root of all evil and the primary cause of general decay, set forward as the one sure means of progress ; till in our own times a Nietzsche can find manifold disciples for his doctrine of Selfhood apotheosised :—the ' great blonde beast ' upheld as an ideal to be followed ; and every noble virtue, divine Compassion above all (as is natural from such a source), upheld as only worthy of rejection and contempt.

Now if the underlying cause of this marked similarity of conditions is the same, in the case of our modern culture, as it was in the decline of Rome and many another ancient civilisation ;—if, that is to say, the life-impulse which inspired our culture is on point of failing ; then, as has been said before, our modern civilisation also is doomed to dissolution,—as the simple resultant of the natural law. But there are many facts that lead us to think otherwise.

First, that in the case of Rome and every other bygone culture that has failed, it has been a single *race* that built the civilisation,—however much it may have owed to the culture of other races. We can understand such failure of the life-impulse where a single race is concerned; for races, as has been pointed out, are higher individuals component of great aggregates of men; and, as individuals, they come into being, reach their prime and then decay, just as do the individual human beings which go to build their higher, more enduring life. But the modern culture covers and has been elaborated by several markedly different races,—as distinct, for example, as the Teuton and the Gaul. And it is difficult to suppose that the life-impulse of so many different races could have reached at the same time to the self-same epoch of decay; to say nothing of the new race now manifestly forming in the American continent—as new races always form,—by fusion of several of the older types. And also, as has been said, one reason at least,—if not indeed the principal reason,—for the failure of the religious ideas which inspired our forefathers is a very high and noble one, —is, in fact, because we refuse to palter with the Truth as now we envisage it.

Such differences are profound and far-reaching, and we venture to suggest that the causation of the modern instability lies in the fact that humanity, in the more advanced section of it at the least, is in process of a great general change, parallel to what in the lower life would now be termed a Mutation. The old theory of evolution, as elaborated by Darwin, Wallace,

and Spencer, represented a given species as acted upon by environmental and other causes tending to the production of ' variations ' ; which variations, it taught, might if advantageous be so augmented by continued natural selection and survival of the fittest as in time to constitute the rise of a race so different from the original type as to constitute a new species. The one great difficulty about the theory as thus stated was that in the geological record no trace of such slow and steady change could be detected ; derivatives of a given species appearing rather to change *suddenly*, by leaps or saltations, than by infinitesimal slow variations ;—a difficulty which for some time was got over by the hypothesis of the existence of ' missing links.' Hugo de Vries, however, demonstrated by actual experiment the fact that a species,—to put it crudely,—remains the same for a certain great interval of time, when, after a brief period of instability, types would appear of so different an order to the original as to constitute new species. This modification, thus confirmed by actual demonstration, is known as the Theory of Mutations ; and is now generally accepted as being the best method of explaining the facts. Now once nature had attained, in person of man, to the evolution of self-conscious intelligence, it is natural to suppose that further changes, further advances in evolution, would no more take place in the world of *form*, in the *space*-association, in short ; but would pass on to the higher order of changes in the *time*-association, in which thought and feeling and all that goes to make up the higher life is extended.

Thus mutations in the human species might be looked for in change of mental and moral type ; and such a mutation, we suggest, is now, and has been in the past century or so, going on.

When we consider, indeed, the mental and moral ideas of only a century ago, we cannot but be impressed by the immensitude of the change that has come over civilised humanity. Our very mentality seems to have changed,—and greatly for the better,—from the type, for example, that could derive moral satisfaction from the parable of Dives and Lazarus. We have,—at least in the more cultured section of the community,—reached a point where the idea of the erstwhile poor man gloating over the torment (so incredibly, to us, conceived as eternal !) of his former benefactor in hell could arouse no feeling but revulsion and horror ; and what is here so obvious in the plane of true humanity is equally apparent in the realm of the intellect. It is a matter of much doubt whether any but a Newton (and he, like most great men of his age, was himself a sort of *lusus naturæ*, a man born out of his period) could, in his days, even have followed the reasoning that nowadays every graduate in a scientific degree must have at his finger-ends. And we have the very significant fact,—in view of what has been said as to the parallelism of the life of the human individual and of a great civilisation,—that only of late years, so far as our history reaches, has a human culture evolved, as we have in the possession of telegraphic and telephonic systems, to a representation of the part taken in the human body by the higher nervous system and its ramifications.

But if the notable symptoms of instability which we observe in our present state are but the natural concomitant of an era of transition heralding and inaugurating an immense change in our mental and moral development, then it is possible that they should pass away as the new conditions become more stabilised. Only in this connection we must remember two facts ; first, and most important, that the changes involved are matters of changes in a world of self-conscious thought ; and must needs therefore be actively met,—consciously and understandingly ; and, secondly, that any period of transition is also of necessity a period of danger (as to the crab that, having outgrown its shell, casts it and is so for the time without protection) ; so that it behoves us not to sit idly whilst this great change in human life goes on around us ; but to very actively and earnestly coöperate, as best we can, with the class of forces that make for betterment.

We have used, in this introductory essay, certain ideas drawn from the material aspect of life ; because it is in that direction and from that aspect that our knowledge is greatest. But it is Mind, not Matter, that is really in life the arbiter ; and in connection with what has been said as to coöperating with the forces that make for good we must ever remember this great power of Mind. Each one of us can so coöperate, if only by setting aside, as far as possible, the evil thoughts in our own minds ;—above all, by *actively thinking* good ones ; just as for their better health we exercise our bodies. Every thought that comes to us does so only to pass on to other human

life, the better or the worse for having formed a little while a portion of our life-stream. Thus it lies within the power of every thinking woman and man to lend a helping hand to Life in this great change which now is happening.

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In closing, a few remarks, of the nature of emendations, of what follows are needed. Mathematical readers are asked to pardon, on the ground of simplicity and remembering that these essays were originally written as lectures, the use, in reference to Fourier's Theorem, of the notation of an elementary differential of wave-motion ;—they, above all, will follow the meaning there intended to be conveyed. As regards the hypothesis adopted elsewhere, that gravitation is transmitted with infinite velocity, it must be explained that that is only an hypothesis. Inasmuch as no substance is known that will act as a screen to gravitation, it is not possible to investigate the matter as the velocity, for example, of light has been investigated. If, indeed, Einstein's wonderful generalisation be correct, *no* form of energy can be transmitted with any greater velocity than that of light. Fortunately for the validity of the analogy involved, the fundamental fact that every atom affects every other atom in space remains true ; even if the time-element *does* enter in ;—only, to our minds it would perhaps appear a greater wonder if there were no interval of time between the cause

and the effect, however remote the distance intervening.

And, in the end, we must apologise for much that is halting, much that is repetional in the following pages. What in them is of value is the extent to which they may accurately represent in modern terms the mighty Teaching of the Buddha. What in them is valueless will, like all valueless words and thoughts, die out by that same reason. What is true will survive, for, even as an ancient Buddhist scripture runs, " *Truth, verily, is deathless speech.*"

# CONTENTS


| Chap. | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| | Introduction .. .. .. .. | vii |
| I | The Source of the Teaching: The Buddha and His Attainment .. | 1 |
| II | The Fundamental Principle: The Universal Reign of Law .. .. | 21 |
| III | The Buddhist World-View: The Three Signata .. .. .. .. | 42 |
| IV | The Four Aryan Truths .. .. | 62 |
| V | The Path of Attainment .. .. | 82 |
| VI | The Three Refuges and Nirvana .. | 106 |
| VII | The Buddhist Doctrine of Re-Birth .. | 130 |

# I

## THE SOURCE OF THE TEACHING

## THE BUDDHA AND HIS ATTAINMENT

There is an experience which perhaps, at some time or another in our lives, has come to all of us, and which, therefore, albeit it involves but the merest surface-contact with that spiritual Reality which lies behind the material universe, may well serve us as a starting-point for our present theme. I will call it "waking to the starlight"; and it comes to us such time as we may find ourselves alone by night, and best when we are far from any human habitation —alone beneath a moonless, star-lit sky. Betimes we have walked on, our minds, as usual, busy on our personal concerns, unheeding all the flaming jewels over and about us; except, perchance, to glance at them for our direction. Then, of a sudden, with a strange, soft inward shock—likest to that which comes in dreams when we remember we are ourselves, and so wake up—some gleam of all that that high star-lit sky involves and means for us breaks in

upon our minds. No more, while the experience lasts, do we see those silent, glowing, pulsing orbs as but bright points of light, convenient beacons for our wandering feet; but rather as incalculably vast and distant outposts of that same miracle of Life which throbs and surges in our own veins; peers out upon us, as we pass, through the eyes of all the woodland creatures of the night; and animates and informs each highest and each humblest unit of all this living, breathing world. No tiniest spark amongst the incalculable myriads wherewith that glittering arch is dusted but is in truth, we know, a mighty Sun; a seething white-hot focal centre of that same universal Life, lost in the profundities of space;—beating out, amidst an organon of flaming storm beside which our terrestial tornadoes were as scarce-felt breezes, heat, light and life to all its servient retinue of worlds; —star speeding unto star the blazing message of its æonian life; flaring forth, pulse by pulse upon the illimitable ocean of the Æther, the story of its share in Being's mystery fulfilled.

And, as such poor fragment as our minds can grasp out of the whole inscrutable mystery and purpose of it all breaks in upon our hearts, how then the utter deeps of our own consciousness—not less star-peopled, we may hope, than those high heavens without—

tir and are moved to life at call of that high glamour:

Life answering to Life, as there we recognise its Oneness, till almost we may hear within our heart's hid shrine the murmur of the stars' high silences,

breathing at last the Word that answers all the mystery, that justifies all the awful suffering of life.

And still, still through the still night within our heart, through all that answering surge of conscious Oneness with all Life, there thrills the sense, the certain fact of that unparalled and impassionate *sacrifice* which pervades existence—Life ever offered up to Life on its own altar—a ceaseless offertory of the present to gain some future incommunicable hope:—till we can bear no more of it, and, crying our "*Domine, non sum dignus,*" we wrest back our consciousness to earth once more.

Now, I have introduced this very common little experience for two reasons: first, because what follows involves above all else the apprehension of the meaning attached to the words 'Spiritual experience*'; and though, as has been said, this 'waking to the starlight' implies but the veriest contact with that great Reality, the Life which reigns beyond the life of sense, it still *is* a contact—one common to all thinking women and men; and, secondly, because it—as contrasted with other similar brushes against the border of the inner life—possesses a peculiar quality of distance and hence dimness in our memories of it, which may well serve

*Buddhism, as will appear later, denies the existence, in man or other beings, of an immutable, subtle principle, or "Spirit"; and therefore, it may seem out of place to employ the word "Spiritual" in a series of essays on Buddhism. It must, therefore, be understood that where this word is employed, no doctrinal implication is involved; but only the ordinary meaning of the word, as relating to things of the interior profundities of the Mind. It is, unfortunately, the *only* word in English having this connotation, and so it is used for want of a more Buddhist term.

as furnishing an explanation or an excuse for what must come. We may well gain, for example, that strong realisation of our Oneness with all Life ; the all-pervading sense of its immeasurable and continuing sacrifice, concerning *this* world's life—the life so lavishly outstreaming from our Sun—an experience which, in contradistinction, we may call "waking to the sun-light." But our memories of these two episodes possess a very noteworthy contrast : that the former, namely, seems pervaded with a sense of dimness due to distance—the lessons learned from the starlight seem truly great, and very high and noble, but they always afterwards appear somehow beyond our using—far off in time and space as are the very orbs that teach them—out of contact with the needs, the nature and conditionings of our daily, homely, human life. Not so the latter ;—our memories of waking to the sun-life partake of the quality of Day compared with Night ; the quality of the present scene and episode compared with the mere recollection of the past.

Multiply that contrast tenfold, nay, an hundredfold, and you may understand a little of the difficulty, the all but impossibility, I find in telling you, in trying to bring home to you, what this great Teaching we in the West name Buddhism really means :—in trying to present to you even my own small grasp of its vivid reality and utter truth. Most of all, unhappily, do I find this difficulty here where I must begin, in respect of the altogether incomparable

nature of that far greatest character in human history, the Personality whom the non-Buddhists of His day termed Gautama; and whom His followers spoke of as the Buddha, 'He who has Awakened.' Out here in the West—because so far the wonderful focus of spiritual force known as the Buddhist Sangha, the monastic Order, is absent—one may read in books of the Master's Teaching, and, like those lessons of the starlight, they seem high, and very great and noble; but, like the stars, so very far away. Even in my own life—who have called myself a Buddhist since my eighteenth year—I have found this contrast always. In such poor fashion as I might, I followed what lessons I might gather from that starlight-like teaching of the books—but, till I went out to the East, I did not know what it was to experience the awakening to the Buddhist light of day. When, eight years later, I first found myself in Ceylon, and, on my first day there, naturally, in a Buddhist temple, the difference was just the contrast between the starlight and the sun-light:—that so wan and dim and distant; this so glowing with the potency of an ever-renewing and all-moving present life. It was incredible, almost, to myself who felt it, this vivid presence of a spiritual reality that once seemed indeed so beautiful in truth, but all so far away. I was to find later, also, that just as the sun-light enters with its glorious, living beauties alike the palaces and the little huts of men; just as it is immediate, acting on us here and now and bringing us warmth and light

and life each following day ; so was it also with this, for me, new risen Sun of the Teaching which, even as but starlight, I had so worshipped and so loved before. There, into the daily lives, the very speech and household customs of the common folk, this ever-present sun-light of the Teaching penetrated ; there, hearing at a festa the gathered crowds take refuge in the Buddha, you could all but see them turn their faces to bathe them in the splendour of His very Presence—till one could understand how, instead of getting angry when they hear the Christian missionaries tell them they are taking refuge in a Being whom their own religion tells them has passed utterly away, they always should answer, as they do answer, only with a wise and a compassionate smile. I had not known what religion could mean until I found myself in the East ; for even the Catholic Church, by far our most active phase of it, seems always to hold its spiritual verities very far away and awful, to be approached only with bated breath ; whilst with this Buddhism of the East you find no whit, indeed, the less of reverence for its sanctities and sanctions ; but, far from regarding these as awful, you find them held as only the inspiration of a passionate adoration such as no western Catholic I have ever known could even approximate—the Teacher's Shrine ever the lodestar that draws the happy, holiday-making crowds. Such may have been the Christianity of Europe in the Middle Ages—though there at the cost of the suppression of all art and science and philosophy

that had not a Christian aspect as men then conceived it—certainly nowhere to-day will you find in any aspect of religion in the western world the vivid, potent living force that Buddhism still is in its eastern home.

So real, so clearly Truth at long, long last, one finds it there that I well-nigh despair of bringing home to you its keen and vivid reality; its poise of perfect assurance; the sense of certainty that herein is very truth for whoso cares to follow it For you must understand that this is no mere cut-and-dried philosophy—as it may seem to one who reads of it out here in books—but a living, breathing Truth; a mighty power able to sweep whomsoever casts himself wholeheartedly into its great stream, far and beyond the life we know and live; and carry and cast him free and safe upon Life's Further Shore.* There in the East its potency is so palpable, its presence so immediate, because successive generations, from well-nigh the Master's very lifetime, have lived and died and gloried in it; and, taking re-birth, have rejoiced in its perfection through repeated lives:—the very air seems vital with the urge of it: and ever with that Great Figure of The Teacher Who Attained at source of it all. Here in the West the religious atmosphere, as far as there can be said to be one now at all, is weak and perturbed with the countless opposing thoughts and hopes and creeds and conflicts that

* "Life's Further Shore"—taken in the sense of the haven of peace to which each being's Boat of Life carries him after long tossing on the angry waves of the Ocean of Being (the Boat itself being the Teaching in its application)—is one of the Buddhist scriptural synonyms for Nirvana, the Final Peace.

vitiate our mental, our religious atmosphere. And it is, indeed, just because I have found Buddhism in its home to stand, to local religion, as sunlight stands to star-light, that it has seemed to me no greater work exists on earth at present than to attempt to bring this living power, this glowing light into our western darkness, out of that old, understanding East, whence ever the Light, whether it be material or spiritual, has come, and still again shall dawn!

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I have termed this series "The Wisdom of the Aryas" because I wished, in the very title, to answer an objection very frequently on modern western lips. Religion, one is so often told, is a matter of racial development, and it does not at all follow that, because certain Oriental races are able even in this latter age to find what they do find in Buddhism, that we Western peoples should be able to avail ourselves of the advantages of that same creed. Of course there is a fallacy to start with here, if we are to take it that therefore those manifold forms of Christian belief, of which western people are so manifestly tired, are the fitting religion for Occidentals. For of course Christianity is not of western origin; like all religions it had the Orient for its birthplace, and that for the very simple reason that the Orient was formerly, long before the West was peopled by the immigration of the Aryan Race, the centre of civilisation in our world. In fact, even were the objection

I have mentioned a valid one, it would operate in favour of, and not as against, the introduction of Buddhism to the West. For this is pre-eminently the Religion of the Aryans—last and greatest of successive generations of Aryan saints, sages, and philosophers, the Buddha came as the culmination of the religious history and the long development of the Aryan Race. Conversely, indeed, one might perhaps even argue that it was just because of the dissonance of the Semitic creed of Christianity with the more purely Aryan elements of the Celtic, Latin and Teutonic populations of Europe that Europe itself was cast back into the dark ages ; and only effectively emerged from them when Christianity had already begun to lose its power. For myself, I think the truth lies between the two extremes, as usual ;—that Christianity was a very suitable religion for the European races in their then uncultured and ignorant state ; when, indeed, Buddhism, with its high philosophy and its hard sayings for worldly hearts to hear, would probably have failed utterly to grip the people's minds.

Not so, however, in this latter age. Christianity, in all its manifold forms, no longer, obviously, is suited as the vehicle of religious truth for western peoples, save the least intelligent ; we have grown beyond that phase of human childhood when its naive teachings could enshrine for us the best of spiritual truth.

When we survey the natures and abilities of the

various races of mankind, past and present, nothing strikes us with greater force than the immense differences which prevail between them—differences no less notable than those existent between the various members of the selfsame race; between, for example, a Newton and an agricultural labourer: a Shakespeare and a village fool. Such disparities do we find that it would almost seem as though the gulf between the highest animal and the lowest human being were less by far than that which exists between the most advanced and the most backward members of the higher races: or even between the more and less advanced races as a whole. This wide disparity of individual and of racial evolution might indeed perhaps be expected in regard to the operation of the mere physical evolution only, when we reflect how Nature, after trying, so to speak, experiment after experiment, and peopling the earth with type after type of sentient life; now taking hugeness of stature; now swiftness of flight; now sheer lethal armament; and now protective armour as her guiding principle, discovered at last that she could endow one of the physically weakest of her creatures with lordship over all the rest by the simple process of devoting all her attention to his brains. Henceforwards, one might reasonably expect, further improvements in the evolutionary order should be looked for no longer in mere outward change of form—the battleground had shifted to the subtler realm of intellect: and thenceforth it would naturally be in

variations of intellectual development that all further changes would be tried.

Be that as it may, the fact is obvious enough, and of all the various great root-races that have successively appeared on earth there can be no doubt as to the intellectual and moral supremacy of the Aryan Race. Cradled somewhere in Central Asia, it developed bud after bud like some great zoophyte, each branching bud, as it reached its adolescence, destined to break off from the parent body and wander forth to occupy new lands. Earliest of all came that branch which emigrated through the Himalayan passes into India; and, in the forcing-house provided for it by that tropical climate, and the easy conditions of life in the fertile valleys of the great Indian rivers, it burgeoned into maturity of growth almost before the later buds from the same parent stem had individualised, and, breaking away, had emigrated westward into Europe. Thus it followed that, at a time when the Greeks and Latins were developing the first rudiments of their civilisations; when, in their harsher northern climes the Celtic and Teutonic and Slavonic Aryans remained yet plunged in the semi-savagery of racial childhood, India became the earliest home and centre of Aryan civilisation known to our histories.

A high condition of mental development may, obviously, take one of many different paths in its manifestation; thus we have the intellectual and artistic subtlety of Greece; the discipline which made

Rome great; or the breadth of mental vision combined with the aptitude for applying general principles to the facts of daily life which has made our England, and the modern western world in general, so peculiarly the home of the applied sciences. But there are primarily two great directions in which the mind of man may issue forth to conquer the worlds that lie before it; it may go *outward*, as it generally does, through the gateways of the senses, into this world about it; observe, measure, and classify the phenomena so presented; and then, retiring within itself, it may brood over these until it elaborates in its depths the laws that govern those phenomena, or the relationships that obtain amongst the facts it has ascertained by observation, and so reduce them into an order from which great general principles may be deduced. Or, on the other hand, if instead it turns *within*, and by intense interior concentration succeeds in penetrating to the depths of its own interior nature, it will find in that direction also world upon world, no less, but indeed, far more extensive, than those the senses present to it from without; the realm, first, of *psychic*, and secondly, of *spiritual* existence, whose facts it may once again, by interior brooding, reduce to general principles, so far as it is able to correctly equate them in terms of thought and speech at all.

Now, just as the keen and lucid mind of the western branches of the Aryan races have, in the last few centuries, so wonderfully blossomed out in respect

of the former kind of knowledge and its application to the affairs of daily life, so did the Indo-Aryan branch, there in the Indian plains where mere physical livelihood came so easily, burgeon forth, in the great day of its maturity, in the far more arduous achievement of penetrating those deeps of conscious being which lie within the Mind itself. That was the direction wherein lay their supreme ability; and generation after generation of Indian Saints and Sages, by dint of practices of mental control so severe that we can only wonder at their fortitude and perseverance in following them, won to a knowledge of the interior infinities only comparable to that which the west-Aryans have lately gained in respect of the outside, the material, or phenomenal world. What we now term spiritual or religious experience became, for the leading individuals of that great race, matters of common and daily investigation and classification and study; till they had attained, long even before the Buddha's time, to an extent of knowledge concerning the interior mental world incomparably greater than had ever been known before, or has in any later time been re-discovered. Just as a man by dint of pulling his faculties firmly together—by dint, that is, of some slight effort at *mental concentration*, can awaken himself out of an evil dream—so, they found, was it possible by a vastly greater effort of mind and will to awaken, as it were, to states of consciousness compared with which the normal waking life seems dull and turgid as a dream. That

interior awakening, they found, laid open to them the portals of worlds as infinitely vaster in time and spatial extent as is our three-dimensional space compared with a superficies ; and, whilst very much indeed of what they came to perceive in those deep plunges into consciousness could only be but poorly and inadequately represented in terms of thought and speech, there still remained a very great sum of knowledge concerning the ultimate nature of life which they were able to place upon record in the memories of their chosen disciples.* They learned how every individual being, so far from living but the one life on earth we see, had existed times beyond numbering, in different spheres according to their different deeds ; and how those who died here did so only to immediately re-appear, in this or some more spiritual or more material world. They conceived all this universal life as being due to the mental energising of one great eternal Being whom they postulated as the *Brahman*—like sparks from that One Fire, they taught, all beings in the universe were but as little fragments of that one great spiritual Life.

* *In the memories*, because this method, of memorising by rote, was for long the only means of preserving knowledge in India. Successive generations of such work have so selectively improved the memory of the Indo-Aryans that, as Max Muller very truly observed, if every copy of the Indian Sacred Books were to be destroyed, the whole, even now, could be reproduced from the collected memories of the Brahmin priests. Even when writing was introduced, the intense conservatism of the Indian mind prevented its adoption for several centuries for religious purposes. All Indian scriptures are either versified or otherwise cast in a form easy to memorise. It is to this fact—that they were designed to be handed down from teacher to pupil by being recited by word of mouth and committed, sentence by sentence, to memory—that is due the frequent repetitions which many Western readers find so tedious in translations. Yet writing was certainly in use—for secular purposes only—in India long before The Buddha's time.

After an eternity of involution, they declared, that Brahman, owing to Desire; emanated all these countless beings from its thought, and, after an inconceivably vast period, all would again return to it, and be once more plunged into the unalloyed bliss of what they termed the Night of Brahman—when all that had been emanated was once again involved, absorbed in its all-underlying Unity. And then again, the Sages taught, the whole tremendous cycle of existence would be once more unfolded; once again Desire would stir the bliss of that self-brooding Spirit; once again a universe be emanated, and so on for ever—the Day of Brahman, the æon of manifestation and evolution; followed by Brahman's Night, the æon of involution—without any end.

Such was the condition of Indian religious wisdom when He, who was thereafter to be known as Buddha, the Supremely-wakened One, was born as the son of a petty Rajah in the north of India: and whose life came as the marvellous climax to all that age of spiritual activity and achievement. Even before His birth, we are told, the Saints and Sages had prophesied His coming—the appearance on this earth of One, the holiest and highest of them all, who should finally throw wide the portals of the Path of spiritual Attainment for all who cared and dared to follow in the Way that He should shew.

Into the details, such few as are known to us, of that great Life—greatest of all that mighty race of men of Insight and Attainment—I cannot here enter

now, concerned as I now am only with the peculiar and altogether incomparable nature of His spiritual Attainment. Those details are familiar to you from the *Light of Asia,* and many another modern work. Here I would only wish to try to emphasise as much as possible the altogether unique nature of His personality. Those who have transmitted to us the facts we know concerning Him have tried to convey the fact of some great *sacrifice* involved in His appearance on earth and in His mission—they have represented Him, in the first place, as throwing aside all wordly wealth and power, even all human love, in order that He might attain to that great liberating knowledge about Life which even from the first He seems to have realised must somehow, somewhere, exist. Further yet, they have represented Him as making a still more wonderful, if hidden, act of sacrifice—telling us how He set aside His own attainment of spiritual liberation for no less than five hundred and fifty lives, in order that He might obtain the power to enfranchise all who should become His followers. These things may have been so; but the point I wish to make concerning them is that necessarily the entering into whole worlds of being beyond the universe we know must involve conditions of which we cannot even think; and I would impress upon you that, as far as I can understand the matter, there *was* indeed a sacrifice—a spiritual sacrifice—involved; but that it was one so great, so utterly beyond our ken, that we can only try to dimly represent it in

terms of human life and thought and action.

Now the one great thing that the Bodhisattva (for so we term Him, even in this last life of His, until the moment of His Supreme Awakening—becoming a Very Buddha), the one great thing the Bodhisattva set out to search for in the unfathomable depths of His own inner life was simply a *cure for suffering;* a spiritual enfranchisement from all the evils and the ignorances which mar and threaten all our lives. For in fact, to the really thoughtful man, that doctrine I have detailed as the chief outcome of the investigations of the long line of Indian Saints and Sages, the doctrine of the successive Days and Nights of Brahman, with the consequent unending cycle of existence, must ever appear all but as terrible as the dreadful Christian doctrine of an eternal hell. For the horror was its utter *endlessness*—through life after weary life, the soul, the spark detached from that one spiritual flame of Brahma, was represented as climbing up, ever up; until, after incredible exertions practised through lives beyond all numbering, learning each little scrap of liberating wisdom through suffering piled on suffering till the brain reels with horror at the thought of it, it won at long, long last to Brahma's peace, and was absorbed into the pure ocean of the spiritual life. But only to come again—only to have the same terrible and torturing pilgrimage forced upon it yet again and again—since, as the Veda itself declared, "*In the beginning Desire arose in It*"—the Brahman Itself

was subject to a Law compelling It to emanate new universes in new 'Days of Brahman'—and so on without any end, without any hope of any end, —for ever!

From that dreadful cycle of repeated lives He who was to become the Buddha sought enfranchisement; sought for a Way whereby the millions of suffering human beings who should follow it might find release from all this burden of uncomprehended Life. Surely, He thought, there must somewhere be a Way Out; must exist some state, some mode of being, which should transcend this individualised, desire-enchained and nescience-haunted life we know?

That Goal He sought for six hard years of wandering and study, and practice of asceticism, and thereafter found; and thenceforth spent the remainder of His long and beneficent life in making known that Way to all who cared to tread it. He found that the Way to that Further Shore of Life lay, not, as the Brahmins had supposed, through state after state of ever-increasing spiritualisation of the selfhood. The practice, indeed, under right conditions, of those high spiritual attainments can *help* in the development of the Path-forming characters; but they are not indispensable; and there are even said to be those who travel all the long Way to Enfranchisement without ever entering any of those High States at all. It is as though one represented those States in a diagram by levels one above the other, with our waking life (or rather our dream-life as lower still)

below them all; and then represented this new Path the Buddha found in the great hour of His Enlightenment by a direction at right angles to the plane of the paper—in a new dimension altogether. It was not, He found, through ever-intensifying states of spiritual self-hood; not through the attainment of self-hoods ever more subtle and more highly organised, that led the Way to Peace. Only *where Self is not*—only where Desire, how subtle it may be soever, has died out like a flame whose fuel is spent—that high Way He taught is found;—through rightly understanding and rightly fulfilling all the mystery of Life, and all the claim it has upon our comprehension and our willing service of its aim.

The detailed nature of that Way will be the subject of a future paper; for the present I must close, and that with what must be in nature an excuse. I have spoken of the difficulty of bringing home to western minds who have not themselves met with it, the very keen and vital nature of this Buddhism as a moving force in Eastern lands this day. But, while it is true we have not here the very atmosphere, made living with the thought of many following generations, we still have two channels through which we may come near that realisation. The first, and incomparably the most potent of these factors, lies in the fact that the Buddha Himself declared that His spiritual power should, after His decease, be reposed in His Teaching, so that this Teaching may in a sense be regarded as incarnating the spiritual

potency involved ; the second, for what it may be worth, lies in the virtue He transmitted to His Order, and hence to any duly-ordained member of it when engaged in setting forth His Way. If, from His Law, as I am later able to develop it before you, or from that value of the *Paramparā*, the Succession of the Ordination, any of you shall be able to gain even some faint glimmer of the Buddhist Religion and its incomparable value to the western world, it will be my very great reward ; and, as you in such case will very surely find, your very great advantage. In that incomparably fairest and noblest blossom on our human tree whom we term the Buddha, over a third of all mankind to-day have taken refuge ; and our western world, with all its strife and its preoccupation with the things of this world may yet find, and I believe *will* find, the greatest answer to its questionings, the simplest presentations of the deepest facts about life, in this same wonderful Teaching of the Indian Prince, who sought and found alone the Way to put an End to Suffering—the Way to Everlasting Peace.

## II

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

## THE UNIVERSAL REIGN OF LAW

How wonderful, beyond all hope of telling, is the simple, common miracle of Life ! One sees the lotus-capsule, swollen well-nigh to breaking-point with a hundred little yellow pear-shaped seeds, each one of them all containing within itself the promise and the potency of untold generations of such a beauty as never an earthly artist shall be able to reproduce ; each of them such common little ugly things that it seems incredible so great a marvel should be hidden in it. The capsule breaks, as the plant that bore it dies, and casts its treasure on the waters of the lake that gave it birth. Floating a little while, the seed is carried here or there by wind and stream and ripple ; till, lifeless thing as it seems to be, it presently grows sodden and sinks down—down to the region of black slime and mire that covers all the bottom of its lake. And there, in the silence and the darkness wherein all life has birth, the miracle occurs ; the seed, as such, decays and dies, but the tiny germ of life within it, feeding, as life ever feeds,

on that decay and death, throws upwards its little shoot, downwards its hair-fine roots, becomes a living plant once more; and, as its roots spread out and take firm hold upon the thick black mire, so ever, directed by that mysterious inmost power we Buddhists term its Dharma, its Nature, the secret Law of it, the stem cleaves upwards through the waters, till, come to the surface and the free wide air, it burgeons into leaf and bud; and at the last this opens to the call of some Sun's dawning—the perfect blossom, splendid and fair beyond all naming—the cycle of its life complete once more.

Out of the darkness into light it grows; out of the prisoning mire into the untrammelled freedom of the air, to blossom in the dawning glory of the Sun; what fitter type and symbol could you find of our life also, so far more marvellous than its? So, the great Indian Teacher taught us, is the inner, spiritual life that lies before us even now. Like the Lotus-seed, the germ of the new life within us can only spring forth to actuality here in the mire of sense and passions that encompasses all our human life; like it, the first step lies in the death of what so far we have considered all-important—our own cherished self-desires; like it, the spiritual germ feeds on that decay of selfishness; like it, at last the cycle of our lives will terminate in some inner, spiritual dawning, all but as inconceivable to us in all its wonder and its glory as were the earthly dawn to such dim consciousness as we might suppose the dying seed to own.

In the last chapter I tried to convey to you some little concept of that incomparable development in India, many centuries ago, of the leading members of the Indo-Aryan evolution in matters of spiritual knowledge and attainment; and how, as crowning all those generations of achievement, there appeared on earth—as always must be when the world is ripe for such high privilege—the Indian Prince, whom later generations were to worship as the Buddha—'He who had utterly Awakened'—out of all the changing dream called life. I tried to show you—granting that no words could really serve the purpose—how the greatness of His spiritual growth stood, to that host of Indian Saints and Sages who had been before Him, as the Sun's glory to the starlight; how, in accordance with His own promise, that inner Light, that Life of Him passed at His death into the body of His Teaching, His Religion; and how, even now, after twenty-five long centuries have passed away, that potent promise stands, till almost you can feel the glory and the glamour of that mighty Personality, the living Presence of Him in that eastern Buddhist world. To-day it is my task to try to set before you the nature of one aspect of His great achievement, the fundamental principle, as it were, that He discovered reigned behind all life; that makes us what we are, just as it makes that Buddhist symbol of the Lotus what it is; and by right use of which, as we shall learn in future papers, we may become whatever we would be. It is not, then, so much with the following

out of the analogy of the growth of that same lotus with which we are here and now concerned, but rather with the nature of the Power behind all life which makes the Lotus grow a Lotus yet again in endless generation; the nature of the Power which the Teacher beheld at work there in the spiritual universe into which He penetrated, operating alike in the lowliest as in the highest forms of life we know, and still supreme in other worlds beyond our knowing—worlds lighted by another Sun, another Moon, another Light, even, than that we know—the higher worlds whereof the holy of all times and climes have told us the existence; the Heavens, whereunto access may be gained by high self-mastery; each tenanted by innmerable beings, all of them just what they are, each of them destined to evolve into whatsoever it may become, by virtue of the operation of this same universal and unfailing Power which is now familiar to English ears in its Sanskrit form of *Karma*—the Law, as one might well translate it, of Action; the reaction of a being's Doing on the universe at large.

Before, however, we pass on to the detailed consideration of the Law of Karma, it is important, for the avoidance of misconceptions, that we should first survey what I may term the *method of study*, the mental attitude inculcated by the Buddha as the only right way of approaching any body of teaching whatever, His own no less than any other man's. And here we are met with a most surprising feature,

one that is, so far as my own reading goes, unique in the history of religion, and very wonderful when we consider that it emanates from just that Being who, as I have tried to indicate, had gone much further than any of His predecessors (and, seeing who these were, that is tantamount to saying further than any human being has since attained) into that realm of insight, of interior vision and spiritual perception wherein, beginning with the intense mental concentration on phenomena, the mind is able to perceive the noumena, the living forces which animate those phenomena ; and so to arrive at what we might well term *direct cognition*—a perfect realisation, as compared with the indirect cognition and only partial realisation which results from the ordinary intellectual working of the mind. For the Great Teacher laid down as an invariable principle that we must not accept any statement as true merely because it had authority, or the claim of spiritual insight at the back of it—not even were that claim made on His own behalf, and the statement attributed to Him. On the contrary, He taught, we must investigate every statement or doctrine whatsoever, comparing it with all that we have previously ascertained or decided to be true ; and only if our reason, thus made the final arbiter, finds that the matter in hand agrees with all we yet know as the truth, and can be accepted as in no wise contradicted by any fact or law we know are we entitled, He taught, to accept the doctrine or statement involved. It is the very method, as

you all know, which has produced such wonderful results by its application in modern physical science ; the essential principle of agnostic suspense of judgment ; and to find it here, set in the forefront of a body of teaching elaborated twenty-five centuries ago, goes far, I think, by itself, to substantiate the high claim I have ventured to make on behalf of the Buddha. Still more surprising is the fact when we consider that it was made in respect of no empty agnosticism, no philosophy which disregards the realm of spiritual experience altogether, and holds that absolute knowledge, direct cognition, is unattainable ; but rather in connection with a philosophy which is actually based on the interior knowledge, a *Gnosis* that is the outcome of spiritual insight of the highest order, and which makes the claim that all who care to follow the means set forth can of themselves arrive at that interior enlightenment.

Both the reason for this erection of Reason to the supreme judgment seat, even in respect of facts and laws which have been ascertained by Insight, and its immense importance to the history of Buddhism itself are very clear. For it is just the one great disadvantage, so far as the thinking world at large is concerned, of Insight or spiritual experience, that it is purely *soliptic*—peculiar to the individual who possesses the faculty ; whilst Reason is, in our present phase of evolution, common to the greater mass of thinking humanity. Few amongst men, on the other hand, even in a great epoch of spiritual

development such as that at the close of which the Buddha appeared, can win to Insight. Furthermore, so immensly extended both in grasp of principles, in utter realisation, in perception of space and time; so immeasurably more vivid and *real* is the consciousness in even the lowermost of the spiritual states, that a man who for the first time penetrates into the interior worlds naturally tends to become, on his return to normal waking life, very exalted in his views of the importance of his particular bit of revelation, so to speak; and, yet again, it is only natural that, in interpreting to this so far smaller mind such scraps as he can carry over and remember of that tremendous experience, many mistakes should be made. In exactly the same fashion a man born blind, suddenly endowed with sight, would at first, as we well know, make all sorts of foolish errors, and misjudge very largely the phenomena this new world of sight presented. Only by his reason, his intellect, could he hope in time to surmount those initial errors; but the attainment of even the first *Jhāna*—as we term these interior states—is a far more astonishing experience than the obtaining of sight to one born blind. And it is because this principle finds application in a very stringent rule of the Monastic Order,* which we will

* The rule referred to, known as the fourth of the *Parajika*, offences involving immediate infraction of the Ordination, and hence exclusion from the Order (and after which the individual cannot be re-ordained), is to the effect that any Monk who shall lay claim to the possession of any spiritual powers or high attainment on the Path shall thereupon cease to be a Member of the Monastic Order. The other three of these *Parajika* Rules involves a similar *ipso facto* expulsion of any Monk who shall commit murder, theft, or sexual intercourse.

discuss in its place, that *Theravāda*, or 'Southern' Buddhism has so wonderfully succeeded in preserving for us the pure teachings of the Master; whilst the Northern sects of Buddhism, which had set aside that wise rule, developed into the maze of heterogenous and sometimes conflicting doctrines which characterize their many schools this day.

So we must remember, in all that is to follow, that the very method laid down by the Buddha Himself is to judge all things at the bar of reason; to accept nothing which does not appear to us to be true. The western world, indeed, terms us *Buddhists*, but that is not the word which we ourselves employ. We call ourselves *Sammāditthi*—"Those who rightly understand." Much that we—after such individual examination as has been detailed—accept as truth was known in India, and some of it elsewhere, before the Buddha's time. *Truth*, then, one might well say, is the Religious doctrine we seek after—Truth from whatsoever fountain it may spring; and the other and more generalised term for our Religion that we employ, *Dharma*, means, in this connection, Truth in its highest, noblest, and more spiritual sense.

One other point of great importance rises naturally out of this—the Buddhist's attitude towards his Religion: that, namely, it must be found capable, not of twisting and turning and adapting—tactics of necessity abhorrent to the Buddhist mind—but of confirming and agreeing with every new discovery that, whether by modern science or in any other way,

becomes known to mankind as certain truth. For while it is true that modern science deals rather with the material, the outer universe, its nature, its relations, and the great general laws or principles that obtain therein ; whilst, on the other hand, our Buddhist teaching is rather concerned with the interior universe, the worlds of conscious life and of the sense and mind ; yet in the last analysis the truths of the one will be found to agree, to supplement, and to support the truths of the other—since each is but a different aspect of the one same thing—Life, and we may reduce the Buddhist world-view to a single formula :—*All Life is One.* So far, our western modern science has not succeeded in applying its methods, save indirectly, to that mental sphere which is the especial field of Buddhist study ; for the simple reason that modern science depends fundamentally on *measurement,* and so far the means of measuring directly that subtle force which we term thought has not been discovered. It is my own very firm belief that even this seeming impossibility will ere long, like so many others, be achieved ; I believe it is within the range even of such resources as science now possesses to apply to certain outlying elements, at least, of the great mental realm just those same methods of study by exact measurements and deductions therefrom that have proved so fruitful when applied to the more material, but still subtle forces—heat, light, and electricity. When that is done, it will be found, I am well convinced,

that certain very definite statements made so long ago by the Buddha will be proved to be true; such, for example, as that thought is a vibration (as science has shewn us light and sound and heat are); or, yet again, that its radiation, to use modern language, is not, as we would imagine, *steady* during the process of a single thought—the analogue of the light and heat emitted from a steadily-burning flame—but that it is *intermittent*—the equivalent of the light from a *flickering* flame. The possibility is a very great one, for far more would be proved by such a demonstration than a mere interesting fact concerning thought. For, since this very definite statement comes down to us from the Buddha's time, when very certainly modern means of research even now not yet applied did not exist, it would prove the claim upon which, ultimately, Buddhism, like all great religions, is founded—that, namely, there exists another method of arriving at truth besides our modern scientific one; that it is possible, in short, to obtain direct cognition of the laws behind phenomena by dint of penetrating inward to the spiritual realm. Hence such a proof as I have mentioned would involve also a proof of the actual existence of the spiritual kingdom, a proof of the supreme value of Insight, and of those methods of mental culture which Buddhism tells us are able to open up that interior universe for all who care to take the needed pains.

Having thus cleared the way by these introductory remarks, and having arrived at the actual method of

study laid down by the Buddha, let us now pass on to the consideration of this great principle which He discovered as the fundamental law of every manifestation of life, using the term here in its Buddhist, that is, the very widest possible sense; as covering alike what we of the west would regard as living and as dead matter respectively. From the Buddhist point of view, indeed, there is *no* "dead" matter: and of the truth of this position modern science gives us an inkling, finding, as it does find, that there is no point in all the kingdoms of nature where we can definitely draw a line and say that on this side of it is living, on that only dead matter. Much experimental work, for example, has been done within the last few decades which shews how metals can become "tired," can weaken, that is, in certain of their properties when overmuch worked or used; and how, like what we would commonly regard as definitely living matter, they recover the lost resiliency and so forth by resting. Certain very delicate responses to electrical stimulation, again, formerly supposed to be characteristic only of highly-organised living matter like nerves, have been likewise found alike in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms; and, strangely enough, these subtle evidences of some dim order of life in metals and minerals have been found to be modified by certain organic anæsthetics and poisons, such as chloroform and hydrocyanic acid, just as nerves are; the metal or mineral in the one case, so to speak,

being put to sleep, in the other finally and irrevocably killed. Thus once again do we find the wonderful results of modern research confirming the views of existence set forth by the Buddha so many centuries ago.

To reduce our fundamental principle to a single formula, we may state it thus: *That whatsoever phenomenon arises, it is invariably an effect produced by an antecedent cause.* In order that we may understand how immense an advance this seemingly trite and simple statement was on antecedent thought in India, and, indeed, on all thought save that of the modern western scientific world, it is necessary to contrast it with the views prevalent in India at the Buddha's time; and, indeed, in the thought, for example, of even modern catholic Christianity at this present day. It is the view, you will understand, that proclaims the universal *reign of Law;* as rigidly applied, in the case of Buddhist metaphysic, to the inner realm of mental action as western science has demonstrated its truth in respect of the outer kingdom of "dead" matter, so called. It stands in vivid contrast to what we may aptly term the *Animistic* view of life, this latter having been the earliest dim reaching-out of the groping human mind towards a philosophy of life.

For when first mankind, issuing from pure savagery, found in the ever-improving conditions of life sufficient security and sufficient leisure, they began to question nature for an answer to the mysteries and the marvels which on every hand she so lavishly presented to

their searching, groping minds. And, as was natural, the earliest attempts all consisted in man's endeavour to measure life, the world at large about him, by the little measuring-stick of his own life, his own nature, his own conscious mind. He saw the branches of the trees waving in the summer breezes; and, motion being for him an evidence of life, since it was *his* method of expression, he deduced the tree was a living being, built after his own specification, and so he thought "the tree-god is moving his arms." He saw, similarly, in the great dark storm-clouds gathering in the heavens the legions of evil spirits, wherewith he peopled his world, assembling for battle, the hailstones their missiles, falling as they sacrilegiously attempted to scale the ramparts of the heavenly gods; the livid lightnings the fire struck from their swords or the special fire-weapon of the avenging deities; the thunders were for him the roaring of their war-cries; and when at last the storm was hushed; when through the thick curtain of cloud-drapery the glorious Sun burst forth, he saw the final triumph of the heavenly powers. And so in all things, to the early man, to not a few in civilised lands even at this present day, all life, all nature was the scene of a continual interplay of *living beings*; and all the phenomena he observed were, crudely and simply, regarded as the actions of living beings, having no other cause but in the arbitrary wills of these.

As the years rolled by, these early views, of course,

became more subtle :—they became modified, especially there in India, where, as has been said, so great a genius for abstract thought and spiritual attainment were developed. The hosts of gods and godlings, demons and ghosts and so forth, still, indeed, were acknowledged (as they are, in fact, in India at this day) ; but, since man had long since aggregated into tribes and clans, each under its own petty chieftain, they regarded the lesser beings rather as more and more the servants of the greater ones ; and these, again, as servient to the greatest One of all. Spiritual experience, also, had a profound effect on the general mass of thought on these subjects. Memories of the vivid sense of the unity of life which is felt in those inner worlds behind the veil of matter came to contribute their quota ; till in India they had arrived at what we might term a polytheistic pantheism, whilst in the more western region of Asia, monotheistic views appeared. But the point to observe is this : that in all these early systems of thought, whether with the pre-Buddhist Indians the universe was conceived as finally reducible to the Brahman ; the Supreme Spirit that was conceived as having emanated it from its own being ; or whether with the Hebrews it was regarded as having been created out of nothing by Jehovah ; or with the Persians it was considered as the resultant of the continual conflict between *two* spiritual powers, one good, the other evil ; in all these early philosophies, in *all* philosophies, save those of Buddhist origin on the one hand or

of modern scientific origin on the other, you find that in the last resort, fundamentally, the universe was conceived as having originated and as being carried on, not by any fundamental *Law*, but by the arbitrary will of some great *living Being or beings*; and to that Being's thought and will, ultimately, all the phenomena of life, of nature, must, according to these views of existence, be considered due. Hence the use of the term *animistic* to describe these views; there was in all of them, finally, if not immediately visible, a *living Being* at the back of all the phenomena of existence; that Being's will, arbitrarily, and, as the lawyers say of the Sovereign 'of his mere motion and will,' was conceived as the final fount, the original source, of all this plenitude of striving, sentient life.

Contrast with this the Buddha's new and great conception. Here we seem to pass out of the chaos of an arbitrary Will, having no restraint save its own desires; into the cosmos of an ordered universe; —ordered down to the last tiniest detail, the smallest movement of the smallest mass of matter definitely *caused*:—itself the cause of yet another action in unending sequence;—and you will gather some idea of how profound, how far-reaching an innovation was this new departure in the realm of thought.

For you must understand that this is no mere arid speculation:—no dream of the philosopher out of all contact with our human life. When I have marvelled, as has been so often, at the apparent indifference of our modern western world to all religious questions,

the thought has always arisen : How is it that they do not see that these religious ideas are just *ourselves*, concerned with the very inmost nature of our own minds and lives, and therefore the most important things in all the world for us to know ? And it is just so with this question of Causation, of the fundamental reign of Law. If that is true, as the Buddha taught, concerning our own lives, our own minds and natures, as well as we now know it to be true concerning the material world at large; then at once it becomes the most supremely important thing in all our lives to understand the nature of this causal linkage : to understand the operation of this great Law ; so that, just as modern science, having arrived at the main principles governing the material world, has forthright been able to apply them to human advantage and use in all the myriad ways we know, we may bring this great knowledge to bear upon what is after all, in one sense, the most immediate and most important thing for each of us—to the furthering of our own personal growth, our inner evolution ; seeing that here, in our very inmost hearts and minds, lie the fallow fields whereof we, and we alone, are cultivators ;—knowing always that if Causation reigns, then even as we sow, so shall we reap ; so that it becomes possible for us, even here, and now, to prepare the way for an advance, a growth, an evolution, far greater and far nobler than, as we are, it is possible for us even to conceive

For it is *us*, this Law of Karma or Causation, or,

to be more accurate: we are a very little manifestation of *it*. Those who do not really grasp the nature of the doctrine sometimes are apt to gird at the Buddhist for what they regard as his over-great preoccupation with himself; regarding the attention the Buddhist pays to his own character, the efforts he makes—by the abstentions involved in *Sīla* or Morality, and the active pursuit of *Dana*, Charity of act and word and thought—as a purely selfish striving after individual happiness. That is an entire misconception, however, for, whilst it is true that the Buddhist is instructed to make daily examination into his character, motives, thoughts, and actions, with precisely this same object of self-improvement, his ultimate aim is rather the *betterment of life at large*, than that of his own future. For to him, as has been said, All Life is One. Now the best thing, from our point of view, that you can do for life at large is to rightly cultivate that particular portion of the whole great world of it, as is, for the present moment, within the range of your powers of cultivation. You can no more better another man's character than you can eat his dinner so as to nourish him; and so our teaching of the ultimate unity of all life brings us very clearly to understand that our best way, so to speak, of reforming, of bettering the world at large, is to reform, to better, oneself. And that the motive—even of the common folk at large in Buddhist lands—is very far from being purely selfish is demonstrated by a custom

which invariably obtains in respect of acts of public charity. It is the belief of Buddhists that we can what is called "make merit," or the sort of Karma that brings happiness, by acts of charity; and it is the invariable custom of every donor in Buddhist lands to recite, after his giving, a formula to the effect that he desires to share the merit so produced with every living being: that all life may be the better for it For, from our point of view, the *mind* is the great maker of Karma, good or bad, and hence the intention of the mind at the time of doing a good action determines the incidence of the resultant merit. Just as certain Catholic Orders devote the lives of their members to the endless task of praying always for all the world—for those who never pray for themselves, so does the whole mass of the Buddhist laity devote the power which it believes underlies every act of kindness to the whole universe of life—a practice, as I think all will agree, which is very far from being 'selfish!'*

There is one other very suggestive comparison which may be made between the Buddhist teaching as to this Law of Karma, and the teachings of modern

* Lest this Buddhist belief that the mere intention of one performing some charitable action is capable of directing to others a share in the "Meritorious Karma" so produced should appear to be at variance with what has just been said; it may be pointed out that *two* classes of Karma may be regarded as resultant from each good (or evil) action. The first, and most important, result of any action is its effect in *ennobling* or in *making baser*, as the case may be, the mind of the doer: this class of resultant is clearly purely personal to the agent; and to it applies what has been said concerning the importance of self-reform. The other class of Karma is concerned with producing painful or pleasurable sensation in train of evil and good actions respectively. The *happiness* (and it only we are taught) can be shared with others.

scientific thought That relates to the doctrine of the conservation of energy. In the same way that physical science teaches us that energy, so far as the material world is concerned, is *indestructible*—you may transform energy from one form of it to another, but you can never destroy the least portion of it—so, the Buddha taught, it is with this energy of the realm of conscious life and thought which we term Karma. It is, so far as the realm of its operation, the world of life and thought and sentiency, is concerned, incapable of being destroyed, although, like the energy of the material world, it may be transformed. The analogy has special value, and, indeed, is probably not merely an analogy, but a simple equivoque, inasmuch as the scientific doctrine of the conservation of energy is connected with a still more modern conception ; the doctrine, one might call it, of the continual *dissipation* of energy. For it has been observed that in every known phenomenon : that is, in every known manifestation of the transformation of energy, a certain portion, sometimes large, in other cases small, of the total energy involved is invariably converted into *heat.* This heat is radiated out and dissipated into outer space, and, whilst still undestroyed, it is, so to speak, lost—so far as we are at present aware—in regard to its further availability in our material universe. Just similar is the Buddhist teaching as to the whole cycle of existence. A given being, we are taught, that is to say a given assemblage of the energies of

life, passes on according to its Karma from life to life ; everywhere and always reaping in the present what has been sown in the past ; everywhere and always sowing in the present the seed whose harvest it will garner in the coming years. Little by little it learns : little by little it grows, taught at first, perhaps, solely by suffering; till, a nobler stature won, it learns also because it seeks after and desires the Truth. That high seed sown, the harvesting follows, the being comes to a life, to lives, of ever-increasing wisdom and nobility and opportunity for yet further growth. And at the last it finds and enters that Ancient Path which leads out of this universe of manifested, karmic, conditioned life for ever ; the being, as we put it, becomes an Arahan ; wakes out of all the dreams of life into a state so utterly Beyond life that we cannot really even think of it, except by contrast. Then, the Master taught, for that one the long cycle of transmigration is completed ; at death the life-energy which constituted him radiates out ; is, as it were, no longer available so far as this world of living things enselfed is concerned. And in any given period of time, we are told, many are they who find that hidden, inner Path : though few indeed compared with all the multiplicity of different lives. Like the dissipated heat of the physicist, the dissipated Karma of the Arahan passes away out of our life-system. But, to this concept, there is a great corollary in Buddhism ; a teaching which yet once again uplifts that great and noble teaching out of the

charge of selfishness which in this matter also has been urged against it. We have seen how, rightly understood, the stigma of selfishness vanishes even from the little virtues of the common masses of the people; far more so, then, where this high Path of spiritual enlightenment is concerned. For, just as a man can, in the little field of mere charity and virtue, best work for all by working for the harvest in that one field of all life's myriads which is his own—his own to work—so far the more does he who enters that high Path of spiritual enlightenment aid, in the doing it, the world of life at large. For every Saint that passes to the Further Shore, we are taught, brings all life yet a little nearer to the Peace; until at last, as the Sutra of the Diamond-Cutter puts it, the time shall come when, in the day wherein the hearts of all living beings shall have become attuned in harmony with the Heart of the Buddha, there shall not remain one particle that now is dust, but shall have entered into Buddhahood.

## III

## THE BUDDHIST WORLD-VIEW

### THE THREE SIGNATA

Let us imagine that we are walking, in some sea-side district on a summer's day, at the time of a new or full moon ; and when for several days perfectly calm and well-nigh windless weather has prevailed : and that we reach the sea-shore at the moment when the tide is out at its furthest; and, since it is new or full moon-time, at its lowest ebb. Since we have supposed some previous days of calm, we shall find an almost waveless sea, lapping, with languid ripples, at the wide extent of sea-bed with its manifold forms of inter-tidal life :—algæ and sea-wrack and a dozen types of waterplants ; limpets and cockles and all manner of shell-fish ; little crabs scuttling about in comic alarm at this departure of the customary waters from their private dwellings ; a stranded jelly-fish or two ; all the little creatures of the tidal waters laid bare to us in their very homes ; and, at the furthest limit of its half-monthly and unending

journey, the waveless, weary-seeming water, all but ready, it would almost appear, to cease even from its languid rippling; to sink into that state of rest which even inanimate matter, so-called, seems always to seek for and to crave.

Then, as we wait and watch, of a sudden a new call seems to have come to the weary ocean,—the call to a new life of action—that it could not, if even it could desire it, find the strength to disobey. It is the old, old call of life to life, of matter unto matter;—life, that is seemingly lost on tiny islets like our earth; mere specks of dust contrasted with the immensitudes of space wherein they are immersed. From thousands upon thousands of miles away each separate grain of dust, each separate atom, each single electron, even, throughout the solid mass of the lifeless Moon; from millions upon million of miles away each rushing particle of flaming gas upon and within the incomparably vaster mass of the Sun, is pulling with a myriad invisible fingers on each and every particle of all the seas before us; and lo, ! in answer to the call of that so-distant life, a sudden pulse of motion thrills again along the shore-lines; the tide has turned; the waters once again come surging in to land. Soon all those deeper portions of the tidal shores, uncovered only in the lowest spring-tides, are deep in water once again; with ever-rising urge and stress, ripple after ripple, and then wave after wave, obeying those so far-off calling voices of the dust and flaming gas in Moon and Sun, have flooded all

the shore-line to high-water level ; then to fall again, and so complete its endless cycle of phenomenal life. But *why* mere matter should so behave not all the wonderful discoveries of modern science yet can tell us ; there is still no theory of gravitation capable of covering all the facts. Only the fact—the marvellous, well-nigh miraculous fact of it we know—that, lost though life seems to be upon these little islands in the vast immensitudes of space, even the lifeless-seeming matter of which the mass of the heavenly bodies consists stretches out little hands through all the empty solitudes towards all other life of its own nature; and when, as follows from the nature of a liquid, it is something free to follow that appeal, it will reach up towards those distant islands in the awful lifeless emptiness of space ; and, where the call is great enough, owing either to the relative nearness or the great magnitude of such life-islands, it will produce results as palpable and as powerful as are the tidal waves which twice each day surge round our shores.

But, whether the effect is visible or no, it is *always* there ; and I know of no better demonstration of the truth of the old Buddhist concept of the inherent and essential Unity of Life, than is found in this discovery of the science of these last few centuries. For there is one curious distinction between this fundamental property of matter, gravitation, and every other radiant form of force or of attraction that we know—that, namely, all those others—

heat, light, electricity, and magnetism—are all propagated at a very definite, though very great velocity through space; namely, at three million kilometres per second, at which rate it would appear all transversal wave-motions must be propagated through what we term the Æther; whilst no limit has yet been set to the velocity of propagation of gravitation. It is indeed taken as being infinite, and, whilst, of course, we can never obtain proof of such a thing as an infinite velocity, we *can* set a lower limit; we can draw a line at some determined value, and say that certainly the velocity is greater than that. Now when Laplace, the great French astronomer, was engaged in the series of triumphant analyses of the planetary motions which eliminated, one by one, all the outstanding differences between the calculated and observed orbits and motions of the planets, there was one last difficulty which for many years withstood even his colossal mathematical powers. It was called the Lunar Inequality, and was a difference, something in seconds *per* century, but still considerable,—so perfect was the order to which he had reduced the planetary theories,—between the calculated and the observed positions of the Moon. And at last he propounded a very novel theory:—Let us suppose, he said, that gravitation is propagated *at some finite velocity*; would that supposition account for this lunar inequality? He set to work, and the result he reached was this:—that, even if the whole of the lunar inequality were to be due to gravita-

tion being propagated at a finite, instead of an infinite rate, as had been assumed, then that velocity must be certainly far more than ninety-million times the velocity of light, heat, or other Æther—transmitted form of energy.

But the great bulk, if not the whole, of the lunar inequality is now, thanks to the genius of our English Kelvin, known to be accounted for by the lunar reaction to the tidal break ; so that, were that calculation to be repeated to day, certainly a much higher figure even than that incredible rate of ninety million times the velocity of light would have to be assigned as the lowest limit. To all effects and purposes we may take it, then, that gravitation *is* propagated with an infinite velocity ; and I would ask you just to consider this circumstance in relation to the Buddhist concept of the essential oneness of all life. I strike my hand on the table, and the action, in that same indivisible instant of time, shifts—by a tiny space, of course, but still shifts—the centre of gravity of the earth. Simultaneously, also, the great Sun swerves in his vast march through space, carrying with him his retinue of servient planets. And, you must remember this : that, minute although that alteration of his path may be, it is, if you give it time enough, by no means inappreciable in its results ; for, since it involves a change from the path he would otherwise have gone, the distance goes on increasing for ever. And not even at our Sun, at our whole family of planets, does the

effect of that action—of every action of every living thing—come to an end. Far otherwise, for in the same indivisible moment of time, if the velocity of propagation be but infinite, great distant Sirius, mightier than a thousand of our own Sun rolled into one huge orb, is likewise set recoiling at a slightly different angle ; and yet, again in that same instant, every sun and star that shines ; aye, and countless long-dead suns as well, are similarly affected. There is no tiniest speck of cosmic dust but is changed in its direction because of that my action ; however remote or tiny ; however near or large. All the great universe thrills in answer to every movement of each living thing in each of all these countless islets of its life ; until we come to understand how, even in this purely material sense, all Life is One indeed ; for force is indestructible and the effect produced continues for eternity. Thus, in a sense, we come to see how somehow every atom of matter has a certain part in every other atom ; is in a manner present in it ; inalienably affecting it each moment of its life.

Another mental picture I would ask you to build up ; one, in a sense, immeasurably more wonderful in its implications than even that picture of the returning tide. It is an old and hackneyed one, in the sense that it has so often been presented—just the picture of a wise man in his garden, watching what a million of mankind had watched in like surroundings before his time—the falling of an apple from its tree But, when the watcher is an Isaac

Newton, what incomparable, what incredible results may follow we all well know ; how the all-penetrating insight of that great mind grasped in a flash the inner *meaning* of that falling ; and how, through understanding it, he weighed, in the keen balance of his intellect, this earth, the moon, the sun, the far-off planets even ; and so laid the foundations for all our science of astronomy at this present day.

I like to think of that old tale of Newton in his garden, if only because it was in yet another, and a fairer garden—the great Uruvela forest—where so long ago another human Thinker, meditating, not merely on the mere material universe our senses shew to us, but on Life itself, the greater universe within, saw, with an insight as greater far than Newton's than was his compared with that of the generality of mankind, the Law of Life which reigns throughout the sentient, conscious universe, even as gravitation reigns throughout the universe of mass. And, just as it needed Newton's insight to deduce the law of gravitation from the apple's fall ; but, the discovery once made by that wonderful mind of his, all of us can see for ourselves—and, if we care, go further, and by special means investigate its truth in detail—so is it also with this so far greater Law of Karma, so far more immediate and intimate to our very inmost lives.

For you must not imagine that Karma is any hypothetical principle ; any mysterious power that only those of highest spiritual insight can perceive

the working of. True, in the interior spiritual universe it has the very seat of its operation ; true, that with such high insight it is possible to see it, as the Buddha saw, actually at work there in the world of life whereunto this material world we see is but the shadow. But even here and now we all can see for ourselves the *effects* of it. Just as we can see the effects of gravitation ; whether in the tides ; in the actual motion of one mass towards another in the modern form of Cavendish apparatus ; or in the variation of the beat-rate of a pendulum as we carry it from a lower to a higher level, but yet can never see it in itself ; so can we, once taught by the Buddha, see the effects of Karma in every action of our daily lives. Where the fundamental effect of gravitation is the reaching-out, the motion, where such is possible, of mass towards mass, the fundamental effect of this Karma, which as I have said, is the Law of Life, of sentiency and of consciousness (and therefore in a sense is our very selves) may be described as *reproduction* in one aspect, and as *Causality* from another point of view. That the Lotus seed gives birth to a lotus, not to something else, may be regarded as a resultant of Karma on the lowest plane of life ; though it is more strictly employed as referring only to the plane of actions in a much higher order of life—that conscious, sentient world in which we ourselves exist and move and think. That the faculty of reproduction is the fundamental effect of mental action our own consciousness, the fact that

we can think sequently and logically; or, as we commonly say, can think *correctly*, bears immediate witness. Every chain of thought, all mental associations, each sequent member of a line of reasoning, are but so many examples of this characteristic energy of Life called Karma—the thing is so; the very fact that I can speak and you can understand is but another instance of it; albeit that it needed the insight of a Buddha to perceive the fact; His incomparable spiritual vision to perceive the very Law itself at work behind all life; following each living being from every sequent birth to every sequent death. Where we can see "only the broken arcs" of it, He saw, behind the Veil of Matter, all the "perfect round."

Bearing this well in mind, let us now pass on to the more immediate subject of this present paper, which we may describe as the *conditions* of this Law of Life or Karma—the characteristic circumstances of its action—just how it works.

Karma, then—or, if you will, all life that is sentient and conscious, for the terms are interchangeable—has, the Insight of the Buddha enabled Him to ascertain, three principle conditionings; in His own language, now called *Pāli* in the West, the words for these are *Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta,* and we interpret these terms as *Impermanent*; as *Suffering*; and as *Unreal* respectively.

Taken together, these three conditionings or characteristics of sentient, conscious life, such as we

know, and are, may be said to sum up the Buddhist world-view, and because in Buddhist teaching they occupy so prominent a position; because they are represented as being not merely, as it so happens, characteristic of the sort of life we know, but absolutely inherent in, and fundamental to, *all* enselfed life whatsoever, it will be advisable for us to employ, as the English equivalent of the word '*Lakkhana*' by which they are generally known, some word which conveys this sense of inherency, of inevitable and fundamental association, in and with all possible modes of enselfed and sentient, conscious life. Even 'Characteristic' lacks in this respect, and it will perhaps be better if, recalling the old Paracelsian doctrine that every living thing bears everywhere within it, indelibly stamped and sealed into every organ and tissue, the *Signatum* or Sign-manual of its inmost nature, we use this Latin word *Signatum*, as signifying that this is a technical term of the highest importance, hardly to be correctly rendered by any ordinary English word.

Now it is precisely in respect of these three Signata that the human mind most actively opposes, and indeed resents, the teachings of Buddhism, and in this connection you must by no means imagine that this attitude is the peculiar prerogative of the modern west-Aryan type of mind. Whether in East or West, in the Buddha's time or at this present day, it is in the very nature of the human heart, the human mind, to set up for itself the well-loved idols of the three

opposites of these Signata, and to fall down and worship them—simply because it craves them so. Living in a world wherein the more we learn of its true nature the more do we find that it is in a state of never-ending change, an universal and unending Flux of Life, we still conceive of something that shall in some new way be Changeless. Living a life that is but one continued effort to escape from the suffering that meets us on every hand, we still hypothesise some sort of life that shall still have indeed the power to feel—but only shall feel happiness Faced with no single state of being that endures, that contacts with Reality, we still dream of a secret power within our inmost selves that shall be Real, true, abidingly the same. I know, alas! no stranger thing in life than this. It is of the very essence of true pathos, this constant effort of the mind, of life that thinks, to sweep aside the whole results of its experience of life; and, error though it must be as we are fain to picture it, this Great Delusion still, I think, contains the germ of a high and wonderful truth. For it seems to me that this deep-seated craving of our hearts after a state that shall be permanent; that shall know naught but bliss; that shall be Real, True—the Absolute Reality—springs, all-tainted with not-understanding as it is, from some interior vision of Nirvāna. Only, of course, our error lies in this: that what we really crave for is no State utterly Beyond all Life, but just the sort of life we have and know during our happier

moments ; we look to preserve, aye, even to exalt that very Selfhood which now bars us from the Peace : and dream that we may win some state of life wherein we shall endure in changeless happiness ; forgetting, alas ! that there can be no perception of light save by its contrast with darkness ; no bliss of rest, without the precedent toil and strife that makes rest blissful.

Let us now turn to the consideration of these Three Signata in detail. First comes *Anicca,* Impermanence ; how all that lives is, as a very condition precedent on living, destined likewise to pass away. All life is but a Flux, but one continual Becoming, and by its very nature there can be no changeless state of life. Yet always, as has been said, man makes his little idols of imaginary things that change not. We talk of the eternal hills, of the fixed stars, even of empires on which the Sun shall never set; and, even, as we think of them, these things, like all that is, are hastening to decay. Let us suppose that the petty span of life we know were magnified a millionfold, and that our sense of time changed in proportion, then those so stable-seeming hills would seem to us to spring up in a morning like some rock-wrought vegetation ; and ere the evening came would be mown down—cut by the very softness of the falling rain-drops, and spread over miles of fertile vale or building sea-floor. We should see the stars move in their courses, despite the vastness of their distance from us ; should see old stars die out and new ones break in glory out of the flaming heart of

some far nebula—everywhere and always change, transition—each moment all the universe is dying; each moment a new universe takes birth.

And, with this changefulness, comes *Dukkha*, Suffering, the second of the Three Signata. And here again our modern western science lends its aid to the understanding and the demonstration of this old Buddhist Truth. For, turning for the moment from that thinking, conscious realm, which is the special field of Karmic operation, and looking back to the very beginnings of organised life such as we know—back to the world of the very humblest forms of life that still survive as though to remind us whence and how we came—we find modern biology employing a term most significant to the Buddhist, when speaking of the nature of the urge that drives the amœba, for example, to thrust forth pseudopodia out of its mass of living jelly whereby it may move about and seek and seize its food. This lowliest form of life we know has no organs in the proper sense of the term, it is just a tiny mass of protoplasm, of living jelly, part of its inner content differentiated into a nucleus, and, enclosing all, an incredibly thin integument whose single sense—of contact—has developed in more highly organised creatures into all the various senses and the mind. The one faculty the biologist attributes to that skin, that little creature as a whole, is *irritability*, and it is in the use of that term that we see the parallel with the Buddhist concept of Dukkha. For the immensely complex structure—speaking here

chemically—of the protoplasm composing the mass of the amœba is in a continued state of *change*—our First Signatum—that metabolism which is characteristic of all living matter. Constantly the complex molecules are breaking down in process of catabolism, and when this reaches a certain point the creature is *irritated*, the equivalent of the feeling which in ourselves has developed into hunger; and so it is goaded, as it were, into thrusting forth little arms of its substance in search of food. Encountering some suitable object, the amœba surrounds it; the portion of its skin that contacts it will then, if it be, say, a nutritious desmid, elaborate and pour forth proteolytic ferments and so digest whatever it can of that desmid. If, however, the object enclosed is only an innutritious lump of sand, say, then the "irritation" increases to such a pitch that the amœba unties itself and flows away from it in search of something better; for it has no more elaborate means of ascertaining whether or no an object can be digested than to try the actual experiment.

Now, although in the strict sense of the word this life of the amœba is quite below the level of development at which it is legitimate to use the word Karma (which, as has been said, implies *mental* action of some sort or kind) yet, standing as this little creature does almost at the very beginning of sentient existence, it may well serve us as an apologue for the greater life of conscious and self-conscious mind. For we, too, are, in every level of our complex beings, in a state

of constant change; life, as ever, feeding upon life in order to live; or, as we might put it from another view-point: dying in order to live. We, too, experience that urge which in the amœba is so dim as only to be covered by the word "irritation," only, with us it has developed into a thousand different complex cravings: from the demand of our bodies for mere food to stay the pangs of hunger and to support our bodily life, right up to all sorts of more purely mental cravings; desires for this and that material object; right up to the pure desire for knowledge about life itself—the keen desire to understand, in order that we may help to alleviate, the suffering we see on every hand. And, with the sole exception of this last and noblest craving, suffering is involved in all of them; suffering, because we must make effort to obtain the thing we long for; suffering, because, even if at last we win it, we find it never is what we supposed; always something else still remains to be desired. And then again the inevitable law of life comes into play—Impermanency is its nature and our bane; so that we always find that the very things we most desired aforetime lose all their savour for us later on. And that decaying of our very faculty for enjoyment also is suffering, till we find at last, as Arnold has it:—

*"Ache of the birth; ache of the helpless days;*
*Ache of hot youth, and ache of manhood's prime;*
*Ache of the chill grey years and choking death—*
*These fill your piteous time."*

Third and last of the Signata is *Anatta*; and here again we are faced with the difficulty that we have no single word in English that really covers all its implication. Atta, the Sanskrit Atma, means literally the Self or Soul; but if we translate the word, with its negative prefix, as Soullessness, we of course convey a totally wrong idea; seeing how much that is of the highest and noblest in our western thought is inextricably bound up with this word "Soul." I have preferred to translate it Unreality, for the idea is that there is not, as our inmost hopes would teach us, an ultimate and enduring Reality connected with this Self which we imagine to stand in the centre of our beings. The Buddhist idea is rather that so long as there remains even a vestige of that concept of the enduring self; so long as we look to any form of enselfed life whatsoever, howsoever subtle and exalted, we cannot reach that Further Shore of Life, which we Buddhists term Nirvāna. Self, and the thought of Self, is, from the Buddhist point of view, the supreme obstacle to the attainment of Enfranchisement, Nirvāna, Arhanship, or Sainthood; and just as the Infinite can be said in no wise to have any part in the world of finite things, so we understand the Beyond of Life can have no part in any such life as this enselfed existence that we know. Rather we might put it that it is just our Selves—or the wrong concept of them, rather—which *because* they limit, stand between the life we ensoul, so to speak, and its enfranchisement in Nirvāna, in Sainthood, or Buddhahood.

We may, perhaps, obtain a clearer conception of this most difficult point of Buddhist teaching by an analogy. There was an Irishman, 'tis said, who, when asked to describe infinite Space replied that: "Space is like a box, wid the thop and the botthom and the sides knocked out of it." Well, that is in a sense a very true definition; for you see that the imaginary box is just one of the things that are *not* Space; the box, with its finite dimensions, as it were limits and bounds and puts an end to that free space. Just so our little minds, our senses, our perceptions—all our finite little faculties—limit and bound and put an end to, where we are, that State Beyond All Life which we name Nirvāna. And the glue or nails, or, better still, the cohesion that holds the box as such together is this very thought of Selfhood, which in all other forms of religious teaching you will find so closely allied with, and assimilated to, the supposedly immortal Soul. Do away, says Buddhism, with the top and bottom and the sides of this poor finite thing that puts a term on the free infinite extension of the "Element of Nirvāna"; do away, rather, with the cohering thought of Self that holds it all together; and, where formerly was only a finite, necessarily limited thing, you will have the unlimited State Beyond this life enselfed that constitutes our Buddhist Goal.

And yet, so potent, as I have said, is the demand of the mind of man for something of the eternal and the

infinite within himself, that in every department of human knowledge you will find this invariable tendency to imagine somewhere, somehow, something that it can set up as an idol for its own adoration. Not even modern science has, till quite recently, worked clear of such ideas ; for this dogma of Realities, of things that are always the same, has found many a cherished resting-place, alike in the science of the ancients and of modern times. The old writers, indeed, as we might expect, are full of such ultimate and enduring principles ; and it is now not forty years ago that a great scientist declared at a scientific congress that the ultimate chemical atoms of the elements were just such eternal and unchanging things. Driven from every other field of modern investigation, the Atma-dogma took up its position there, as its last citadel in modern thought : an atom of Hydrogen, Helmholtz said, had been an atom of hydrogen from all eternity, and as an atom of hydrogen it would and must remain for ever

Still, knowledge grows. It was only the beginning of this present century which, with the wonderful discoveries of radioactivity, conquered even that last citadel of eternal stable things in life as viewed by modern western science. Then it was discovered that the very atoms themselves are changing, in some cases so rapidly that we may observe the process ; and hence, inferentially, in all, could we but demonstrate the fact. Thus here once more has modern science moved into line with Buddhist views.

In a later paper, we shall see how important a part this teaching of the Three Signata has in the more practical applications of Buddhist teaching; how much of our progress on the spiritual Path is taken as dependent on our grasp and inner realisation of these three principles. Every day, in every Buddhist shrine in every Buddhist land, you will hear the kneeling worshippers reciting those three words: *Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta*—Impermanent! Suffering! Unreal!—trying to teach themselves the hardest, the most difficult lesson in all life. It is so hard to realise, just because we least of all *desire* to accept its truth, and yet, unless the Insight of the Greatest of Mankind was utterly at fault, this teaching of the Transitoriness, the Suffering, the Unreality of Life is not only true; but it is only through its full realisation that we can enter on the high Path to Peace.

But He who was of all men Wisest knew, better than any of us all, the repugnance of the human mind to accept these teachings of experience; so well, indeed, that we are told in the Commentary story of His life how, after His high Achievement, even that compassionate Mind deemed for a little while that His great Task was hopeless;—that men, so wedded to this life of self, this hope for everlasting joy, could never bear to learn this first essential lesson of the Transitoriness, the Suffering, the Unreality of all possible enselfed existence. And we are told, in oriental imagery, how life that suffers and still hopes could not endure the threatened deprivation of the

new great Wisdom He had won ; so that the mightiest Being of our world, the Brahman, the universal Oversoul, cried : "*Surely am I lost, I and my creatures,*" and manifesting before the Teacher, besought Him not to turn aside from His æonian hope of finding, and then teaching, some new Way to Peace. And then, it is written, the Master gazed with His matchless spiritual Insight over the world of all the living, thinking beings of our world-system, seeing the hearts and minds of men spread out before Him like lotuses in some great lake. Some, newly springing from the mire of Nescience which is behind all life must wait, indeed, He saw, for many æons ere they might blossom into the free air above the waters of Life's Triple Flood. But many, He perceived, many there were whose hearts, like lotuses with stem and leaf and bud developed, had by their own growth won clear above those waters, and, in the prefect bud, awaited only the dawning of the Sun of Truth. Then at the last, He saw, His Teaching once declared, those hearts would break forth into the perfect blossom ; the æonian cycle of their manifold lives accomplished, to pass into a State so utterly Beyond all Life that we who are in Life can find no thought of It ; only by contrast, at the least, with what we are and know. *Our* opening hearts, *our* lives,—perchance come nigh to that great Blossoming, then, too, He also saw—and who can tell how near each one of us may be to that supreme Achievement ?

## IV

## THE FOUR ARYAN TRUTHS

Man, the Thinker—for such is the derivation of our English word—Man, the puny little mammal who, by his thought alone, has subjugated all his fellow creatures on this planet ; has conquered all of the Four Elemental Kingdoms of the ancients ; made Fire his plaything and his servant ; wings his way through the Air ; dives at his pleasure into the Ocean's deeps ; delves into Earth and seizes its treasures ; who has even found the way to lay hold on the subtle Æther and compel it to his bidding ;—Man, so seeming small and yet so truly great by that one gift of Thought, ever confronts the Universe with two great questions on his lips :—Why ? and How ?

All human knowledge, including even our wonderful modern science, is the answer Man has won to the latter of these questions—How ? How the lightnings flame, how winds and tides arise ; how the stone falls to the ground and the heavenly orbs pursue their wonted courses ; these and a million other answers he has wrested, little by little, and within the last

few centuries with ever increasing acceleration, from the stern and silent lips of Nature, by power of that magic flame alight within his Mind. But to his other question—Why ?—he never yet has won a single answer that he could reveal unto his fellows, and that for a very simple reason : there is no answer to it here in this moving, breathing, sense-life that we know. Only beyond the veil of matter, in the noumenal realm of the subtle forces that dwell beyond the reach of the senses, is it even *possible* that any such answer should exist ; and time and again, men, having by dint of high interior development penetrated into that realm, have brought back from it this or that supposititious answer to that Why ? of life ;—only to leave behind them, to the world to which they sought to impart their great discovery, the direful legacy of a formula devoid of all reality, of any generally-comprehensible meaning ; the sure subject of innumerable discords for future generations of their followers in the coming years. Such have been the dogmas and the doctrines of the greater part of all the world's religions, and we all know well how there is no other single cause of dissension amongst mankind than these same formulæ :—these attempts at rendering into terms of thought the mysteries of that realm which lies past thought itself.

It was the Buddha, as we have already seen, who first amongst the mighty Seers of our human history boldly declared that words and thoughts never *could* bring us any true and useful answer to these

questionings; who framed all His Teaching on the principle, not of giving an attempted answer to the unanswerable, but of shewing only how each human mind that cared to take the trouble might find what answer there may be to them in his own heart. Yet even before His time, as after it in other lands, great Seers caught a glimpse of this irrevocable truth. Even in the Vedas themselves, those ancient Indian scriptures which date back to the very beginnings of the great Aryan Race, we find, sandwiched incongruously enough amongst the hymns to Agni and Varuna and Indra—nature gods of Fire and Wave and Sky—one immemorial hymn ascribed to a God never before or after mentioned, a God with a very curious style indeed, the celebrated Hymn dedicated to the God "Ko?" Now "Ko?" is the Latin Quo?—the English Who?; simply the interrogative relative pronoun; and if, characteristically enough, the forgotten author of that ancient hymn could only formulate the great idea he had achieved in animistic terminology, as addressed to some entirely new God, we can still see in it the germ of that great principle which was so much later, in the Buddha's hands, to be so clearly and definitely stated. "*When neither aught nor naught existed*"—somewhat thus it runs—"*Before the viewless sky arched over the broad enduring earth; before the Light shone or Darkness hid; Who covered all, Who thought, Who was?*"—and then the refrain, repeated after every strophe: "*Who is the God to Whom we shall*

*sacrifice* ?" And another wonderful hymn ends thus, as though giving all the answer that there was to give :—"*Even the Most High Seer in the Highest Heaven ; perchance He knows, perchance even He knows not.*"

Likewise also the later Qabalists adumbrated the same principle when they spoke of the 'Ineffable Name,' that is to say the Name that could not be uttered ; the equivoque of the Idea that existed, and yet was beyond all thought.

But it is in the Teaching of the Greatest of the Indian Sages and Seers only that we find this principle quite definitely stated; and find, moreover, as has been said in a previous chapter, that it is brought into practice as the actual method that the Great Master taught His followers to employ in their religious, no less than in their worldly thought. Therefore it is that we find Him maintaining what our Scriptures call 'the Noble Silence of the Wise,' in answer to all these questionings that we may classify under the word Why ?, and for this same reason—more, perhaps than any other—is Buddhism able, after twenty-five centuries of existence, and including as it now does over a third of all mankind within its fold, to make what I conceive to be its proudest claim : that it has never, even where it has been most powerful, persecuted a single human creature for holding other views, for following other systems of religion ; that *a fortiori*, it has never waged a so-called 'holy war.' Where it could not prevail by reasoning, by simple

force of its undoubted truth, it has not sought to prevail at all; and, as we all know full well, it is the only great religion of the world that can make so wonderful, and so significant a claim.

So, therefore, when we come to its central formula, its fundamental Doctrine of the Four Aryan, or Noble Truths, you must expect to find no attempt to answer the unanswerable Why—only the How? of Life is dealt with here. But it is more, as we shall see, than this alone; for it definitely sets out to teach us not alone the manner and nature of existence, but also how we may ourselves so elevate and train our minds that we may enter into the inner kingdom of the Mind; may pass behind this veil of matter and sense into the realm of Causes, and see the hidden workings of that Law of Life whereof in this waking state of ours we know only the effects.

When first we come to study it, this formula of the Four Aryan Truths seems so simple; and obvious, even, almost, to triteness. But all really great principles, all fundamental formulæ, are like that. What could be simpler, triter, if you like, than the inverse squares law? And yet we know that all the complex movements of the heavenly bodies, and very many other phenomena, such as that of the tides, the synchronous beating of a clock, and so forth, are due to just that simple principle which that trite formula equates.

So is it with this Buddhist Formula of the Four Aryan Truths:—Simple to triteness at first acquaint-

ance, the more we understand of it the more do we perceive its universal operation throughout the whole vast realm of sentient, conscious life. It is an answer, as we have seen, to the question How? applied to life; and it tells us, in Truth the First, that all life is inextricably and inalienably involved in *Suffering*. Truth the Second tells of *Suffering's Cause*: How this lies in Desire, in Self-desire alone; how, because all living things *will* set up for themselves a Self in opposition to the whole great Life whereunto they belong; *will* work and lust and live, not for all life at large, but for this fancied Self alone—Suffering follows them from life to life, until at last they learn life's highest lesson; until they cast out Self and its desires completely, and live and work at last for Life unlimited. And this is Truth the Third: How, in proportion as men thus cast out this idol of the Self, thus realise their Oneness with all Life and live and work as best they can for all Life's betterment comes *Sorrow's Ceasing*. And the Fourth Truth is the *Way* whereby this may be done: by *Rightly Understanding* life; by *Right Aspiration* for its betterment; *Right Words, Right Acts, Right Mode of Life, Right Effort, Right Recollectedness*, and *Right High Attainment*.

Let us now take these Four Aryan Truths one by one, and consider what they mean in detail. Truth the First—the Truth that Suffering is inseparable from the life enselfed—has, to an extent, in the last chapter on the Three Signata, been surveyed. There

we saw how, even going right back to the earliest and lowliest forms of life, Suffering, in the widest sense of it, was still involved ; as is so well implied in the significant term which modern biology employs for the sole function it attributes to the simple protoplasm of the living cell—*Irritability.* We saw how the continual Changefulness which characterises the great molecular complexes which constitute the protoplasm of the amœba, for example ; as it were irritates or goads the tiny creature to effort in search of material wherewith to supply the constant breaking-down of those great complexes. To reduce the matter to its essence, we might put it that the living matter of the cell possesses, in this respect, an application of that most fundamental of the properties of matter in general, namely, *Inertia* ; that the cell-consciousness, as it were, *resents* this change, and strives, by replacing the breaking-down molecules, to maintain its structure in the fully-synthesised condition. There we have the rudimentary manifestation ; there, in the very beginnings of life as we know it ; and, remembering the old proverb that the child is father to the man, we well can understand how, with ever-increasing power as life grows more evolved, that dim rudimentary goading, that effort to preserve the *status quo ante,* developes further and further, till we reach the clear and vivid self-conscious and self-founded suffering of man.

But with man, because in him alone we have not only a self-unit, arrayed in his unwisdom against all

other life, instead of in harmony with it, but, further, a *self-conscious* one, we come to a new phase in the conditionings of Suffering For, by the very fact of his self-consciousness, since all mental action is dual in its very nature, we have the possibility, lacking in the lower forms of life, of surveying this antinomy of Self and the Not-Self ; and, further yet, with the highly-developed man, of actually being able, now and then, to exteriorise, as it were, his selfhood ; to conceive of other units of life as suffering as well as of himself ; and with that new great faculty, man reaches upward to the spiritual kingdom ; for the feeling of sympathy, of compassion with others' pain, is the nearest we can *live* to the realisation of our Unity with Life.

And when we consider this noble faculty of Compassion—breath, as it were, from the Beyond of Life Itself, from the Goal whereunto life is surely moving—when we consider how it is of the very essence of solidarity, the outcome only of the very highest sort of evolution, lacking, alas, even in many a being in human form ; when we consider how, therefore, as height after height of progress is attained, *this* faculty must obviously increase beyond all limits that we know : then, I think, we receive the final irrefragable reply to that fond hope of selfhood : that *it* may win to some new sort of life where, still a Self, it may continue in eternal and unchanging bliss. Once, indeed, men could indite, even in their sacred books, stories of an envious beggar in the bliss

of heaven looking down and gloating over the suffering of the erst-while rich man in hell ; but even we ourselves have grown so far beyond that epoch of development that I am quite sure none of us could hope for happiness so long as we well knew there lived one sentient thing in pain. How, therefore, can we dream that in a vastly higher state of life suffering for any being still enselfed would pass away ? Rather, surely, seeing as we do see that with the inner growth comes ever a greater and a higher need of sympathy ; seeing how Compassion is the very faculty that lifts a man above the brute, and how it is the root of all we term humanity, civilisation, and true progress ; rather must we conclude that just in the ratio that any human being may progress, his capacity for suffering by sympathy must grow ever with him, until at last he learns life's final, highest, holiest lesson—to live no longer for himself, but for this piteous, suffering Life alone.

Concerning the two central members of this fourfold formula, it is hardly necessary to enter into any very detailed argument. We all can see, only too clearly and too well, how Suffering's Cause lies in this Self-desire ; and hence how, where desire for Self is ended, suffering too must draw nigh to its close. Setting aside for the present purely physical suffering, it is obvious enough how most of our sorrow depends directly on desire for sake of self ; for either, lacking some desired object, we long after it, and so comes pain ; or, hating some condition of our life, we long

to be enfranchised from it, so suffering comes once more. And here I must correct one common misapprehension as to the causation of unhappy and painful states. It has sometimes been given out that *all* pain whatsoever comes from Karma, that is: arises from our own wrong-doing in the past. That is at any rate not the teaching of the Buddha. He taught, indeed, that apart from Karma, there were seven other possible causation-linkages of Suffering: such things as heredity, for example; as climatic conditions and the like. To take the latter instance: if, in this country in the winter; or indeed, at most times in the year, we go out insufficiently warmly clad, or get wet feet, we catch a cold, and that is suffering. It rises, truly enough, from Nescience, not-understanding, the *Avijja* of our books, if we do it in ignorance; but we may know that that result is likely, and still take the risk, in view of some ulterior motive which may be sordid or may even be sublime; still we shall suffer from catarrh or worse. The difference, I conceive, between the suffering due to Karma, and that due to any of these seven non-karmic causes lies in the fact that, whereas by merely worldly knowledge we can, if we choose, and happen to possess the proper sort of knowledge to be able to apply it, *evade* the results of any of the seven collateral causes referred to; whilst, so long as we remain as living units in this world of sentiency, we can never evade the suffering which Karma brings. The reason is simple: we *are* our Karma, and so, until, by

entering the Path to Selflessness and Peace, we attain to a certain degree of emancipation from our erstwhile selfhood, we can at most postpone, but never can at last evade, the fruition of any sort of Karmic action whatsoever.

As to the manner in which the Karma of our bye-gone lives can bring about suffering; to understand this truly we should of course have to be able to enter that interior and greater Universe wherein the forces that we call Karmic have their field of action. But we can get some sort of an idea concerning its mode of operation if we consider the nature of the actions represented as resulting in pain-bearing Karma; the infringement, for example, of any of the elementary ethical laws which we find implied in the Five Great Precepts of Morality. Take, for example, killing or stealing; it is only, you must bear in mind, the very illusion of Selfhood, the false belief that we can work for Self against the whole of Life at large, that can permit us, so long as we are sane, to do such actions. In short, every such infringement is an infliction, at the time we do it, of some loss, some suffering, on some other living unit or ourselves; we may not, blinded by self-desire, see that this is so, but even the simplest analysis will assure us of the fact. When, then, we so bring suffering into being, we must remember the axiom of science that action and reaction are opposite and equal; it may seem, indeed, to our ignorance, our not-understanding of life, that it is *another* whom we kill, *another* from whom

we steal, but in reality it is ourselves. To look at it in another way,—consider how the body, the vital forces, all of our total make-up, are determined, as it were afresh for us by the operation of this Karma at each re-birth. The result of some specific act inflicting suffering on the universe will be that that body, those vital forces, some little part of all that complex which constitutes our being, is *wrongly fashioned*; injured, as we might say, by the reaction of the universe from that ancient evil-doing; and in that defect of our own organisation lies the field from which in its due time the suffering due will grow.

Now as to the Path itself, the Fourth of these Aryan Truths, by rightly following which the Buddha taught we may cast out this idol of the Self and grow in spiritual stature till we at last awaken from this dream of life for good and all. It consists, as you all know, of certain definite modes of conducting our lives, both in relation to the world without and to the hidden world within. Here, again, a common, and in this case, very natural, error is frequently found in non-Buddhist lands; in that it is sometimes represented and supposed by students—who find this Path-formula always given in one definite *order*—that these several members of the Path, *Right Understanding*, and so forth, stand for a sequence in time; are meant to be taken up and perfected consecutively.

That is not the case; we might rather regard them, not as successive stages on a road, but as the different

elements which together constitute that road; as, in an actual road, one might talk of the road-metal, the ditches for drainage, the pavements, and so on. But in fact, in one aspect of this Eightfold Path there *is* a certain element of consecutiveness; whilst we are supposed to make some effort at developing each separate faculty all the time, it is still taught that the full *perfection* of each comes in a certain order; in respect, namely, of the classification of these eight members as pertaining to *Kāya, Vāca,* and *Citta*—Body, Speech, and Thought—respectively. Thus the fourth and fifth members, *Right Action* and *Right Mode of Life* (our method, that means, of gaining our livelihood) are the first of the Eight to be perfected, because they relate to the Body. Right Speech must be perfected next; and lastly the remainder. Thus, whilst the very entry on the Path —as we shall see, when in the next chapter we come to the discussion of the practical application of all this —implies a certain amount of intellectual grasp and appreciation of *Sammāditthi,* the first member, *Right Understanding;* it still is not until the very end of the path of progress that this *Right Understanding* passes into full perfection; becomes the absolute *Realisation* of the Dharma, which is the prerogative of the Arhan, the fully-evolved being, only.

To take these eight members now in detail. *Right Understanding* is to be regarded as the realisation of the truth of those Three Signata or Characteristics

of Life which formed the subject of the last chapter ; the understanding, that is, how all enselfed life is impermanent, is fundamentally involved in suffering, and devoid of any eternal self-reality. *Right Aspiration* is defined as being the aspiration for the relief of the suffering of life at large ; the aspiration after purity and peace. *Right Speech* is that which is true and loving and wise and helpful to those we speak to ; *Right Action* consists in living according to the moral law. *Right Livelihood* means following only such profession or mode of life as shall bring no suffering into the universe to add to the terrible burden of its misery ; *Right Effort* or *Right Energy* means the direction of all the inmost powers of our being towards the great and difficult task of gaining true self-mastery. As to the last two members, *Sammāsati* and *Sammāsamādhi*, which I have above translated as *Right Recollectedness* and *Right High Attainment* respectively, we have no single words in English which really convey their meaning. The wonderful spiritual genius of the Indo-Aryan race which has been referred to previously, had resulted in the coining of special words to cover those higher states of consciousness with which so many of its members were conversant ; for us to understand what these words really imply, so far as may be possible without the actual experience being known to us, it is needful to enter into some explanation.

Buddhist metaphysic represents our waking consciousness as being, not, as we should suppose, a

continuous action; but tells us that, even during the process of any single thought, the mind alternates with extreme rapidity between the two phases of consciousness and unconscious existence. This very interesting statement, one which, as I have before said, may one day ere long be proved susceptible of demonstration, has for me the greatest interest, if only because there exists a most illuminating parallel to it in modern physiological discovery. For it is known that when, for example, we contract a muscle and keep it contracted, as in gripping a dynamometer, neither the physical grip, on the one hand; nor the difference of electrical potential at different points along the nerve controlling the muscle—the sign-manual of the nerve-impulse which causes that contraction—on the other hand, remain steady, as they appear, and as we intend them to do. On the contrary, both are in a rapid state of variation; and although the oscillation-rate is nothing like the very high number which the *Abhidhamma* (the metaphysical section of the Buddhist Canon) attributes to this oscillation of the thought-impulse, yet we can see in the one the adumbration of the other; and all natural considerations would indeed lead us to expect that the rate in the case of muscle-contraction would be much slower; that it would be damped down, so to speak, in the case of the nerve-muscle arrangement; seeing that here we have not the free action of the nerve-structure only, but that this has to overcome the inertia of the vastly larger mass of muscles which it actuates.

Now fundamentally it is this oscillation of the mind-effort ; this flickering, to use the common Buddhist analogy, of the flame of thought, that is sought to be overcome by these two processes of *Sati* and *Samādhi*, Recollectedness and Concentration. *Sati* aims at doing this, we might put it, by filling in the gaps, preventing the mind from constantly lapsing back into unconsciousness ; whilst *Samādhi* aims rather at so exalting the whole impulse as to lift, as it were, even the normally unconscious elements above the level of the normal threshold of consciousness. The one method may in this aspect be regarded as the complement of the other ; the aim in either case, being ; to revert to the flame-simile, to ' make the flame of the mind burn steadily,'—with no more flickering. In the light of that steadily-burning flame we ' see things as they really are ' :—awake, that is, into the super-sensual world.

From another point of view we may regard *Sati* as being the constant maintenance of the memory of our high spiritual aim ; and *Samādhi* as the actual consciousness awake in the interior and spiritual realm. From yet another view-point we may consider *Sati* as implying a continued watchfulness : simple and conscious observation of the phenomena presented by the mind ; and *Samādhi* as the intense effort at one-pointedness, at interior concentration, which is the essential pre-requisite to the awakening into the inner, higher, mental realms.

And now to survey the Four Aryan Truths as a

whole, and to consider for what reason the Buddha thus styled them Aryan or Noble. In past papers I have sought to shew how the great Aryan Race, taking its rise somewhere in Central Asia, and not improbably by the shores of some great inland sea, which now has vanished, but of which geology still can find the traces; came as the final and highest development, up to that time (which is tantamount to saying up to the present) of humanity on this our globe. That Race, as we have seen, sent forth offshoot after offshoot; and first to branch off from the parent stem, and earliest even in its ultimate development, was that branch which emigrated from the primal stock; and, penetrating the great Himalayan barrier through its passes, came to inhabit all the Indian peninsula. Advanced beyond all then existent races as they were, the Indo-Aryans found the fertile valleys of the Indian rivers already inhabited by various vastly lower races; and, contrasting, as youth and pride are ever apt to do, their own high modicum of civilisation with the relatively wretched status of these aboriginal inhabitants, they styled themselves in their own tongue, the Aryas or Noble Ones; and from that vivid contrast sprung those tendencies which, losing that fluidity which is synonymous with vigorous life, have crystallised into the caste system of India at this day. We Euro-Aryans, not less indeed than they, retain even yet in our social structure evidences of the self-same tendencies;—even now, just like the Indians, we

shrink from either sitting at meat on the one hand; or, on the other (and above all) from intermarrying with members of a social rank we deem inferior to ours; and so in case of many another tendency.

Now, whilst of course there was much of mere pride about this attitude of the Indo-Aryans; whilst they doubtless oppressed the lower aboriginal inhabitants, as the higher castes in native Indian states to this day oppress the members of the lower castes; there was yet in this attitude of the Indo-Aryans of those early days a very potent power for good. It preserved them, for example, from intermarriage with the inferior races; though it was rather of the mental than the material advantages that I would speak. They, in their own thought, were the *Aryans*, the Noble Ones; theirs, therefore, they recognised, was the task of living up to this ideal. Their *Dharma*, their duty, was the duty to live nobly; not pettily or meanly, but greatly and nobly, on the earth they owned. We find exactly the same spirit in our modern English; and still,—so strong is the vitality of words,—we employ precisely that same term the Indo-Aryans employed; changed, of course, into its English equivalent. We say "it is not good *Form*" of anything ignoble; and Form, in that usage, is precisely that old Sanskrit term *Dharma*; we mean, as they meant by it, it is our *duty*, because we are—or hope we are—noble of mind, to abstain from petty meanness and lying and all that is base.

Now it was this sense of the word which the Great

Teacher had in mind when He termed His central Formula the Four Aryan Truths. And in this connection we come at once to the charge you are always hearing brought against Buddhism by those who least understand it : it is so *sad*, they say ; so pessimistic that the only use, the only hope it can see in life is to get out of it as quickly as may be possible.

Let us in this connection consider a little parable. There was once, perhaps, a bird; a tender and beautiful bird indeed, but one cursed with an inalienably pessimistic spirit. So, when one day it was greedily feeding on the ground, the Cat came that way, and so pessimistic—not to say so foolish—was that bird, that, instead of remembering she had wings and so could fly away, she moaned and lamented and squeaked and chirped, and ran in circles in despair. "O!" she mourned, "This dreadful Cat! So surely as I come down to the ground to eat a nice fat worm, this Cat, so evil and so cruel, is after me for sure! There is no escaping from the Cat." And, of course, whilst thus she spent her energies in mourning her sad lot, that lot transpired : the Cat sprang on her and ate her up completely ; and that was the end of the bird—as also of the parable.

The application, of course, is obvious. There is indeed a deal of discussion, in the Buddhist teaching, of what I may be permitted to style the Cat of Ill, and if the matter ended there, Buddhism would indeed be pure and utter pessimism. But Buddhism does *not* end there ; it is mainly concerned, in the termin-

ology of my parable, with teaching us birds *to learn to use our wings*.

Yet of course it is very hard, this looking of life boldly in the face, this refusing to be blinded by what we should prefer to believe; this realising, even constantly *teaching* ourselves to see, the Sorrow and the pain of which life is so full. All the human heart and mind revolt from it at first; we want to live in a world so unlike life that it should be ever blissful. But it is *true*, and it is just because the truly noble man is one who does not let his mind be put off with pleasant fairy tales; because it is incumbent on him, as part of his nobility, to see and face the truth; it is because, in short, this Teaching is no outcome of the human nursery, fit for the consolation of the immature, but the product of the noblest and most highly evolved Mind that ever lived on earth; that its Founder styled this central formula that of the *Noble* Truths. As to its fundamental 'pessimism' the very word is out of place. To recognise this life of Self as full of Suffering is the work of the adult, the grown-up human mind; the manly mind, too noble to palter with the truth it sees; and rather, indeed, might we style Buddhism the religion of ultra-optimism, when we consider how its teachings, looking life thus nobly and uncringingly in the face, can still pass on to the revelation of an incomparable future, an incomparable Goal beyond this mass of suffering—still can tell us that out of the very Sorrow that it shews us may spring one day a State beyond all Life; the very purpose and fulfilment of what we now so dimly understand.

## V

## THE PATH OF ATTAINMENT

When we considered, in the last chapter, the fundamental Buddhist teaching of the Four Aryan or Noble Truths, we saw how the incomparable Mind of Him who propounded that formula as the very essence of the Insight He had achieved to, placed Sorrow, Suffering, at the head and front of it ; teaching how it must in the nature of things follow all life enselfed as though it were its very shadow ; never leaving it until Self's dire delusion, too, had fled. We saw how exactly modern science had, (since it too is founded on the facts of life, not on the fancies that uninstructed men would prefer to believe) re-discovered of late a portion of that great truth, in relation to that '*irritability*' which constitutes at once the cause and the effect, as you regard it from one aspect or another, of the movements; and, hence, ultimately, of the life of the lowliest and simplest organisms found on earth.

And if, turning from that kingdom of the lowliest, to that of the highest form of life we know—to that,

not merely of mankind but of the more advanced amongst men—we should ask ourselves what, in us, is the greatest sorrow ; where, in us, lies the ultimate root of it, which no advance that we can see can ever eradicate ; I think that but a little thought will shew us it lies—as, yet again the Buddha taught—in Nescience, in Ignorance, in *not understanding life.*

To live, to suffer, or, still worse, to see others suffering, and not to understand :—what sorrow can be worse than this ? Surely, none that we can think of. From the dim 'irritability' of the lowliest creature to the keen and vivid self-conscious suffering that so many human ills give rise to is one, if an immense, an all but immeasurable step ; but from such personal suffering to pure mental *sorrow*, such as the knowledge of *another's* pain arouses in us all, there lies, as it seems to me, a greater step again by far. For in acute physical suffering our mind is to an extent deadened and inactive ; our energies are all employed in meeting and bearing what has come to us ; there is a limit beyond which human nerves can bear no more, when the mind refuses to react. But the heart-rending mental pain that comes even to the least advanced amongst us when we stand by some loved fellow-creature, human adult, or child, or even animal ; and see it in agony, and can do *nothing*—and cannot understand—there seems to be no limit. And the terrible fact remains that in truth we *always* are so standing ; that

the further on the path of human progress we advance, the more clearly ever do we realise our innate *Oneness with all Life*, the more vividly we perceive that ever-present torment of all life's manifold offspring: till we can understand how those who have passed to yet far higher stages in the path of evolution must surely sorrow over *that* dire mass of suffering more even yet than we can suffer over the agony of but one loved human thing.

Such, indeed, was the Noble Sorrow which, we learn in our Buddhist Scriptures, inspired the mighty Being who was destined to become the Buddha through five hundred and fifty lives of strenuous striving and of ardent search after the secret that should at last bring healing for some portion of life's agony,—lives, in the earliest of which He, the Bodhisattva, was already so far advanced that He could have won to the Goal of Life but for this incomparable sympathy with all that lives in pain. So, when we reflect, we see it must ever be with such as stand in the forefront of the wave of human evolution; for of all the manifold powers and faculties of the human mind this sympathy, this compassion, stands out as manifestly highest, noblest, best; we see on every hand, in all our human history, how, as one would expect of our highest possibility, it has been latest to develop, so that even now there are races of men on earth who can hardly be said to possess more than its merest germ; whilst we innately recognise those races as standing in the van of progress amongst which

compassion, or, as we rightly term it (recognising thus its restriction to the highest form of life we know) *humanity*, is most advanced.

Now it may seem strange that I should preface an essay on the Buddhist Methods of Attainment, on the Buddhist Path of Progress, by adverting yet once more to this central Buddhist doctrine of the inalienability of Suffering from all life. But the fact is that in that recognition lies the very root of the whole matter; on our realisation of the Truth of Sorrow depends the possibility of our entering that high Path. We live; we are a little of this teeming universal life. Life suffers; we do not understand. Knowledge, we well know, is power. How, then, can we hope to win even a little understanding of life's inmost mystery; to gain even a single step upon the path to that great power to help, if from the very first we refuse to accept, to realise and make our own, the truth that is only too sadly obvious to such minds as all of us even now possess? In the evil dream which I have used before as an analogy, it is not until we *realise the suffering* of the state in which we find ourselves that some stirring of the deeps within us tells us that *from this dire state there must be some escape.* It is that realisation which goads us into making the effort to arouse ourselves; to call forth all the forces of our being to find the way out of that conditioning of terror and of pain. Just so, it is taught us in the Buddhist books, there comes the high Awakening from out this direr, greater dream of

life:—only when we are goaded into strenuous endeavour by our realisation of the Truth of Suffering. As if a man should wake up in the night-time, runs the old analogy, and should find the house about him all on fire, filled with smoke, and crashing into ruins ; as for that man at that time there would arise no questioning as to where he was, or how the calamity arose, but only the overwhelming impulse to escape from that conditioning, followed by the concentration of all his powers on that one aim ;—just so is it with one who comes to realise how all this House of Life is burning, over his head and all around. "*On fire, O Brothers, is this life of sense!*", the Master taught in one of His noble Dialogues ; "*Sight of the eye and sense of touch and taste and scent: aye, and the thought of the mind within! And with what Fire does it burn withal? With the Fire of Craving Greed, the Fire of Passion, the Fire of the Delusion of Self ;—with this threefold flame of Ignorance, of Not-understanding does it burn.*"

As you all will know, the specifically Buddhist portion of that training whereby we may later come to find our feet firm set upon the Path to Peace consists in following a course of training of the *mind*. We of the West, of late decades especially, have given much attention to the training of the *body*; but until quite recently we do not seem specifically to have realised that our minds were likewise open to improvement by definite practices of mental calisthenics ; and that, since we are in the ultimate (let us hope),

rather minds than bodies, our minds, in respect of such attention, stood in first place and foremost need. Now, indeed, we have, as the outcome of the pains-taking work of hundreds of psychologists in the laboratory, our few first tenative attempts at modern methods of exercising and training the memory, the power of observation, and other mental faculties of foremost importance in our daily, outer life. The special genius for study and interior discipline of the Indo-Aryan race had led to the development in India, long before the Buddha's time, of many different systems dealing with the training, not only of the powers of observation and of memory, but also ; and, indeed, more particularly, of those underlying faculties of the mental realm which we of the West would classify as spiritual rather than mental. Such systems, as has before been said, the Greatest of the Indian Saints and Sages had, before His supreme achievement in the Attainment of Buddhahood, practised and become perfect in ; only to set them aside as not leading to that enfranchisement from suffering which His compassion had set before Him as His goal. But He had thus the very great advantage, when He came to elaborate His own system, of a thorough, a practical, and an experential knowledge of all His immediate predecessors had accomplished. Unfortunately for us of these latter days, He had another advantage:—that, namely, in dealing with many, at least, of those who came to Him for instruction, He was dealing with a body of

men who were already deeply conversant with certain practices and certain mental states; so that often a mere word or short expression sufficed to convey meanings and to imply conditions with which we of the West have no acquaintance at all. Thus the remarkable fact arises that whereas the question of mental training necessarily stood in the very forefront of the duties of the Monks, we find that whilst mere outer details of the Monk's life are dealt with with the greatest minuteness and exactitude, we do not find in the actual Canon itself any detailed description of these practices of meditation at all. They are often, of course, *referred to;* but always in set terms, definite compound words or short phrases; phrases of exceedingly technical character; and since the states and practices involved have so far not entered into the sphere of experience of even the cultured of our own race, we have no equivalent expression for the resultant states in English; or indeed, in any other modern European tongue. In the whole vast range of the Pāli canonical literature we find only these set formulæ; practically untranslatable as they stand, and involving a technical knowledge which we do not possess; and if, as would appear to be the case, we have in the Tipitaka or Pāli Canon the whole of the original Teaching as it existed at the time of the Great Teacher's Passing-away; it can only be said that from this canonical literature alone we should not be able to understand, even indirectly, the nature of the

states resulting from these practices, much less the actual methods by which they were to be attained.

Fortunately for us, besides the actual Canon, there is extant a secondary immense literature, consisting of Commentaries on the Canonical text, composed of explanatory matter handed down at first orally (as, indeed, was the Canon itself), and, later, committed to writing in the same Indian vernacular, Māgadhi*, in which the Canon is now written. In various parts of this great body of writings—notably in the great work of Buddhaghosa, the *Visuddhi-magga*, or *Path of Purity*, we find at last a description of these mental exercises; and, to an extent, a description of the nature of the resultant mental faculties and states; and it is mainly that work which I shall draw upon in such brief descrpitions as can here be given.

But before passing on to these details, it is necessary to deal with certain essential pre-requisites of any attempt at entering upon any branch of this system of mental culture. One of the Buddha's chief disciples summed up the whole course of his great Master's Teaching as to the discipline to which the aspirant to the Path of Attainment must subject himself in a single stanza, which has been termed the

* Māgadhi, 'the language of Magadha' is the correct designation of the vernacular the Buddha taught in; but it is now commonly termed Pāli in the West. The word 'Pāli,' means 'a range of things set in a row.' When the Teaching, after years of being handed down orally, was committed to writing, the written script came to be referred to as 'the Pāli'—from the ranges or rows of characters following one another in the written palm-leaf MSS. Later this term Pāli was used for the original Canon of the Buddha's own Teaching, to distinguish it from the "*Attakatha*," or Commentaries, and Western scholars at first supposed it to be the name of the actual *language* employed in the Texts.

Buddhist Creed by some western writers. The term is technically incorrect, of course, for Buddhism not only asks for no mere *belief* in its teachings, but actually deprecates it. Still, as a brief summary of the whole course of conduct inculcated by the Buddha, we may fairly regard this stanza as the Buddhist equivalent of the Christian Creed ; so long, at least, as we shall bear in mind the fact that, where Christianity holds up *belief* in certain doctrines as the means of salvation, Buddhism inculcates a certain *course of action*, of conduct, as the sole means of attaining that Liberation from Self which constitutes its Goal. Literally rendered this stanza runs :—" *The avoidance of all ill-doing ; the fulfilment of righteousness ; and the purification of one's mind : this is the Discipline of the Buddhas.*"

The first of the three parts, then, of the Buddhist training, ' *the avoidance of all ill-doing* ' in the stanza, refers to *Sila*, Morality ; and more definitely and particularly to the negative side of the ethical system:—the avoidance of the taking of life ; of theft ; of inchastity ; of false and harsh speech ; and of the use of intoxicants ;—being the irreducible minimum of restraint incumbent even on the layman. You must understand, of course, that no man, least of all he who, by the mere fact of his *needing* to teach himself, to train himself in respect of these matters of elementary morality, is supposed to be invariably and all the time absolutely perfect in respect of them. It is the *intention* to keep these Precepts inviolate

that is really involved; that, at least, combined with the constant effort, while such is needed, to avoid failure in respect of any of them. But, like all else of which we make a habit, the avoidance of such action grows upon us; till at last, except perhaps in very minor respects, and under very unusual circumstances, the practice of Sīla, negative morality, becomes more or less automatic. It would be, not merely useless, but, indeed, very dangerous, for anyone who habitually failed in any of these five cardinal cases to attempt to proceed to the practice of mental training. For the first effect, the first sympton of success in such training is to very greatly intensify all our faculties; the forces which that training awakens are potent beyond anything normal to the ordinary life; and, whilst in a well-balanced nature, already held in firm self-restraint, their awakening results in the sudden blossoming, as it were, of every one of our faculties; to arouse them whilst yet we are the plaything of our own weaknesses and passions would—if by some peculiarity of the individual Karma it could be accomplished at all—result in utter disaster.

Bearing in mind our principle to accept nothing until we have tested its validity by the reason, it is here essential for us to consider what these Precepts of Morality really involve; what, to employ a modern term, is the *sanction* for their maintenance. A little thought will shew us that what each of them involves is *causing loss or harm*: whether. as with

the first four, to others; or, as in the last, relating to the use of intoxicants, to our own living bodies. We are setting out to attempt to reduce the suffering of existence; and so, quite obviously, we must, before even commencing to move in that direction, cease to move in the opposite one: that of inflicting suffering on life.

The second line of the stanza, '*The fulfilment of righteousness*' relates to the positive or active side of morality; it is in Buddhism simply reduced to *Dāna*, Charity;—true charity, that is to say, of thought and speech and act alike. Here again, when we consider the bearing charitable conduct in these three respects has upon its object, we can at once perceive the connection, the reason why such perfect charity of heart should be an indispensable pre-requisite of entering the Path. All Life is One, and charity is simply *the expression of that fundamental truth in acts and words and thoughts*. We seek to overcome this illusion of the Self within us; then we must make our life one manifestation of Selflessness; that is the ideal. There is no one of us who is not in reality dependent, in more ways than most of us can see, on the help of others at each moment of our lives; and the Buddhist concept of true charity is, not to give, not to help others, in order that we may be helped in return; but only because giving when we can, things immaterial as well as things material, is itself the rendering into terms of life of that great truth of the Oneness of all that is; and hence involves

motion towards the Goal of Life.

In the monumental Buddhist commentary, the *Visuddhi-magga*, or *Way of Purity*, the various practices involved in the system of mental culture are classified under forty separate heads ; and besides these there is one practice of the greatest importance, which I will take first, since it should invariably precede any attempt at actual concentration. This practice is termed *Satipatthāna* ; or, as one might put it, the Attaining of Recollectedness :—*Right Recollectedness*, you will remember, being one of the eight members of the Fourth Aryan Truth, the Noble Eightfold Path.

Now what does *Recollectedness* involve in this connection ? Let us consider the ordinary state of the human mind. Like all else in this Ocean of Being, the Mind is liable to constant change. So far as the mind we function with in this normal waking life is concerned, such changefulness is involved in its very nature. The object of this Sati-practice is, then, not to put an end to this condition of flux of the mental stream, which would be impossible ; but to *direct that stream always in the sense in which we desire that it should progress.* And the method advocated is not only a very peculiar one, but one that is most difficult to pursue. It consists, as it were, in constantly observing, in standing apart and watching and noting accurately just what we are doing all through our daily life ; combined, on the one hand, with a constant effort to cast out the Self-concept

from our consciousnesses as they arise ; and, on the other hand, with keeping before us all the time the recollection of our high aim :—that we are doing this in order to the reduction of the suffering of life. Say, for example, you are walking, you keep your mind wholly engaged in observing the consciousnesses connected with that action ; not thinking, as the ordinary man would do if he directed his attention to walking at all : ' *I* am thus walking,' but analysing each separate motion *impersonally*, thus:—' There is a raising of the right leg ; the body leans forward ; the right foot comes to the ground and takes the weight of the body; now the left leg rises,' and so on. And, whilst thus minutely watching and analysing out whatever you are doing, you all the time keep at the back of your mind the thought in view :—' *This is not I ; this is not Mine ; there is no Self herein.*'

And so with whatsoever you may be engaged on, you sit apart, as it were, and intently watch, down to the minutest detail, what you are doing ; you suppress, as far as possible, all idea that it is *you* that do these things ; you assert, as it were at the back of your mind, that this doing involves no real ' Self ' at all ; and all the while you bear in mind the fact that you are doing this in order to lessen the suffering of life ; in order to break away from the slavery of Selfhood, of passion and of sense ; in order to awaken out of the Dream of Life into that Realm of Everlasting Reality which lies Beyond.

As has been said, this is a most difficult practice,

especially, of course, at first. For the Mind, accustomed to a great extent to wander wheresoever the winds of sense and passion waft it, is terribly irked by this restraint ;—like a child deprived of all its accustomed toys and made to sit quite still, or walk up and down in a room, it simply clamours for its old-time license. Wherefore many who commence this practice—all, indeed, who have started upon it only in idle curiosity, expecting soon to gain some marvellous power thereby—abandon it after a mere short trial. And here we see at once why we are taught that we have got to get worked up to the state of one who awakens in a burning house, before we can find the will and make the effort requisite even to the preliminary work of finding the Path. We, of the West, in particular, are sadly lacking in that enduring *patience* which the Teacher truly indicates as the indispensable pre-requisite of the Seeker ; a fact, I think, largely due to the petty and parochial concepts, of a single life, of time, and of space, which until quite lately prevailed in Europe and America. To the Oriental, especially to the born Buddhist, with his hereditary concepts of life as but one of an all but countless series; of an infinity of space occupied by system upon system of life-teeming worlds ; and of æons piled on æons of duration beyond all counting; there seems to be less need for hurry:—what, indeed, is even a whole life-time, when compared with the countless myriads he understands have gone to make him what he is ?

But to those who have the earnestness that rises in train of even a partial realisation of the Truth of Suffering, even this arduous practice of *Satipatthāna* presents no insurmountable object; and, whilst, indeed, no miraculous powers result from this preliminary training in Recollectedness, he who wins through until the practice becomes well-nigh habitual *does* find within himself the very greatest enlargement of his powers of memory ; of observation ; and, above all, of *thinking impersonally*;—the main purpose, you must bear in mind, to which this practice is directed.

For, apart from its effect in the enlargement of our powers of memory, of observation, and of keeping our great aim always in view; this process has a most potent protective effect against what constitutes the great and terrible danger of the next step—the practice of Concentration properly so called. For the result of the latter practice, sooner or later, is that the mind suddenly attains to one or other of eight successive stages of intensely-vivid consciousness ;—states which we can only dimly conceive of by analogy with the immense difference between our memories of dreaming and of waking life ; and when such attainment comes, all that is then within the content of the mental make-up becomes intensified beyond all computation. And whilst it is true that when, the effort over, the mind sinks back to the normal waking life, we can of necessity carry back with us from those realms of mighty con-

sciousness the barest dim recollection of what they were when we endured them ; yet even that *recollection* is so great, so vivid, so immeasurably beyond any previous experience of the practitioner, that there is a grave and very terrible and real danger of his becoming mentally unhinged as the result even of what he can remember. Since so much of the normal man's thought is centred round this phantom selfhood—so that, for example, we tend to think '*I* am smoking *my* cigarette' rather than the impersonal form, 'there is a cigarette-smoking going on'—it naturally follows that without this preliminary process of Casting out the Self it is *around the illusory Selfhood itself* that all the wonder and the marvel of that memory of Attainment centres. Thus the very least danger that may result lies in the direction of a more or less permanent megalomania being established ; whilst consequences more terrible by far may ensue in the case of one who penetrates that sanctuary of the hidden potencies of Life with craving thirst for life, and lust, and passion and delusion, flaming with the potency with which, alas, they *do* flame in the ordinary uninstructed and untrained human being.

There is another difficulty that arises, even for one who has, by long and careful practice of *Satipatthāna*, sufficiently attenuated the false concept of the Self. This lies in the very multiplicity of the methods laid down in our sources—classified, as I have said, under forty-one different heads ; although, as certain

of these consist in the employment of very similar subjects of concentration, we may reduce that total to a relatively small number. Still, the fact remains that there are a number of different possible ways of starting our practice; and that it is said that for each individual only *one*, or rather perhaps a certain few of these, are likely to open the door of the inner world. In the old days, there were many practitioners of these methods; and, therefore, many who had attained to the possession of that interior vision which could look at an aspirant's Karma as the ordinary man can look at his bodily presentment; and so could prescribe for him, so to speak, the sort of practice that would most readily open for him the interior mental realms. Now, in this non-Buddhist land at least, that advantage is no longer procurable; and for this reason I will confine my description of these practices of concentration to two particular methods, one of them subdivided into four separate subjects, concerning which it is definitely stated that they may advantageously be practiced *by anyone*.

The first of these consists in a process by means of which it is possible to recover the lost memory of our bygone lives; and, apart from its general applicability, it has been selected because western people in general find a very great difficulty in thinking of *one single subject only*; most of our own educational thought is done by means of *formulæ*, of chains or sequences of thought, that is; and this

method of recovering the bygone memory consists in such a sequent practice. Another reason for its selection is this: so, far in these essays, I have *assumed* the fact of transmigration, or re-birth; and many western people, not understanding the reasoning on which that assumption is based, are apt to regard the Buddhist concept of transmigration as involving the mere acceptance of a dogma on faith. It may, therefore, be of advantage to turn aside at this point to the consideration of this question.

We may divide the reasons by which the Buddhist convinces himself that re-birth is a fact, under two heads, the theoretical and the practical. Those of you who have followed previous expositions as to the nature of that Karma or Law of Life which, in a sense *is* ourselves, will understand that the Buddhist regards any particular entity as the outcome of a particular bundle of life-forces, due to its own past doing on the world, which forces in their last resultant have made him to be what he is and has been at each moment of his life. In the material world, to take an illustration, we see that a lotus-seed, under fit conditions, gives rise to a lotus-plant;—not, the point here is, to a plant of *another* kind or, *a fortiori*, to an animal. That productive power of life the Buddhist logically attributes also to life's highest manifestation (so far as our knowledge goes) the consciousness of man; and, just as in the material world we know that the lotus seed gives rise to a lotus because that lotus-nature has been impressed upon it through millions

of generations of slowly-developing lotuses ; so, we argue, does the appearance on earth of so far more complex and highly-developed a form of life as a self-conscious human being demand a similar inheritance from innumerable lives. But in that very self-consciousness itself man possesses an attribute so far above the mere material form and vital characteristics that we cannot accept that the descent, so to speak, of this wonderful self-conscious *Mind* can have come by way of the purely *material* heredity. The body comes from a bodily descent ; the mind, so peculiar to man, and so immeasurably more developed than the body, must likewise have come by way of a purely mental descent. Force, both Buddhism and modern science teach, is indestructible ; the Karma, or mental make-up, is an immensely-complex bundle of *forces ;* that can only have originated, it seems logical to conclude, from a closely-similar mentally-constituted creature. And if we are asked :—' But why should not this mental complex, when at the death of the body it seems to pass away, become dissipated into general space, as the elements of the body are dissipated into solids, liquids, and gases, never to recombine in one bodily form again ? '—we reply that that is precisely what we *do* conceive as happening in the case of a Buddha or an Arhan at the demise of his body. But so great a portion of the mental doing of the ordinary, unattained man, consists of *thoughts of Self ;*—thoughts, that is, which *bind together,* how ignorantly soever, the various mental attributes

in one individual ;—that we think those binding thoughts must likewise realise themselves; and do so, naturally, by holding together yet again and again all that bundle of elements of consciousness that would otherwise be dissipated, as it were, into the universal space of consciousness. That is the main argument ; there are collateral and minor ones which cannot be entered into here.

The other, and, as we may term it, the *practical* side of our argument for repeated lives lies in the fact that anyone who chooses to take the necessary trouble (and there is no knowledge at all that we can gain *de novo* without making more or less of an effort) can, by the process now to be described, recover for himself the memory of his bygone lives. But it is only right that I should add that the Buddhist does not enter upon this practice in order to obtain that proof ; the theoretical side of the argument seems sufficient to his logical mind. The object with which this particular practice is entered upon is totally different ; it consists in the fact that it is one of the most efficacious methods of obtaining that utter realisation of the Truth about Suffering which we are taught is so pre-eminently important.

The method then is this. Choosing, as for all these practices is requisite, a place and time of day when you will be free from interruption, you enter your room and sit down and relax. Then you begin to *think backwards*, passing over the actions of the day in inverse order, as though you were *swimming*

*up the stream of memory.* At first, of course, you can only remember fully all the incidents of the immediately past few minutes ; but the memory, perhaps more than any other mental faculty, is astonishingly amenable to cultivation. Thus you will find, as you perform your meditation for a few minutes to an hour each day, that, whereas at first you had to jump, as it were, from stepping-stone to stepping-stone of the more important events of the day, you will in no long time find yourself able to swim up the stream of thought—to glide smoothly from event to event, omitting no smallest detail in your memorising of the day's work backwards. When you can do this for a day you increase your period, using 'stepping-stones' at first, you go over a past month, a year, and so forth ; and ever, as you diligently practise, you will find your memory seeming simply to blossom out indefinitely. So, bit by bit, you go on till you can practice swimming up the stream of thought over some considerable epoch at any part of your life, and then you begin to remember all sorts of things the ordinary man has quite forgotten : such as the immense pain and trouble you had in learning to speak, in getting the right meaning into words ; and many other most interesting developments, into which there is no time to enter, likewise occur. Now, when each day you get back to your sleeping-time the night before, you would come, perhaps after a few dreams just before awakening, to a blank wall of unconsciousness, that period when the mind

was plunged into the oblivion of deep sleep, which you have to skip, as containing no memories. Just so, as you now become able to go back year after year, to penetrate in memory the forgotten stage of childhood, of infancy, you always come at the last to your moment of birth in this present world, and, beyond that, an utter blank. There is the agony of the birth-moment ; the frightful, clamorous inrush of the senses, demanding your attention and refusing to be denied, when you only want to lapse back into unconscious peace ; and then a blank, dead wall ; all the memory there is relating to the period of the pre-natal life, during which the consciousness was likewise plunged below the mental threshold, even more deeply than it is in deep and dreamless sleep.

Time after time you come back to this point ; and time after time that dead blank of unconsciousness meets you. But if you persevere, then one day you will find yourself remembering the moment of your death in your last life. Now it so happens that at the death-moment—or even when we come within measurable distance of death—the mind automatically rehearses this very process of remembering backwards, in a series, generally, of intensely-vivid little picture-presentations,—like watching a kinematograph film. So, from this memory of the death-moment you can pick up at least the salient details of your last life ; and, once you have thus succeeded in penetrating the veil which hangs between birth and death, your power of recollection

grows in geometrical proportion, till life after life is open before your mind, and you can see the causal linkages from life to life ;—how here this evil habit allowed to go unchecked, bore bitter fruit in a later life of some great lack of character, leading to disastrous results ; or, on the other hand, how some very potent good act or thought, some noble tendency carefully developed, dramatised itself in some later life in an environment most suitable to progress ; and then again, perhaps, how you neglected that great opportunity, and so came to endure yet many another pain-filled life.

The only other concentration-practice that can here be described consists in what is called the Four Sublime States ; and, instead of leading, as does the last process detailed, to the recollection of bygone lives, it opens the sealed gate which cuts the most of men off from the hidden, inner mental sphere. It consists in practising thinking thoughts, severally, of *Love* to all beings ; of *Compassion* for the sufferings of all creatures ; of *Joy*, or rather *Sympathy*, with the right happiness of all who are rightly happy ; and, lastly, of *Discrimination*, or *Aloofness* from the worldly life. For this, as for the last, you choose a given time at which it is important you should always practice ; since in this way you establish a habit which makes the work indefinitely easier. To the best of your ability you summon up the several high emotions mentioned ; till your whole being is pulsing and vital with them, letting no other

thought whatever enter into your mind. That, of course, is very difficult ; but it is vastly easier with these noble feelings than with any mere external object of meditation. As in all these practices, you will seem to make but little progress at the first ; but later, if you persevere, suddenly you will find your ability to flood your consciousness with those feelings grows beyond anything you could before have conceived. And then, when at last you have succeeded in awakening, by dint of this concentration-practice, into the *First Jhāna*, or the mental state above this waking life, you will realise at last, more than any intellectual appreciation can teach you, how utter-true is the Buddhist teaching of the illusion of this life. For, just as, on awakening from an evil dream, we see how our fear, and our pain, and the monster in the nightmare that pursued us ; aye, and more, the very space and time in which the incidents of all the dream occurred, were but a little bye-play of the functioning of our mind, locked as it then was in the delusion of the dream-life ; so all that here we know and love and hate and think so real,—and even the time and the space wherein the universe as now we see it is extended,—is in truth but a little cloud, a tenuous film, as it were, upon the surface of that vast Consciousness in which then you function ; such is a glimpse of the nature and results of some preliminary portion of the Buddhist mental training.

## VI

## THE THREE REFUGES AND NIRVANA

There is a passage which recurs again and yet again throughout the whole great range of the Buddhist canonical literature—more especially, of course, in the *Sutta Pitaka* or Collection of Sermons —till we might almost regard it as a sort of refrain to a particular class of chapter. Again and again we learn how this or that great teacher of the time—Brahmins or Samanas, leaders of schools of thought or of ascetic practice ; Kings and slaves ; dialecticians both male and female—came to the Great Teacher, the ' Incomparable Tamer of men's wayward hearts ' as the old phrase has it, setting forth each his or her own little system of thought or action, and demanding of the Buddha His answer to this or that deep problem of life or of thought ; His explanation of their difficulties, or even, not unseldom, hoping that they might perchance overcome in argument this renowned Exponent of views and teachings so novel and so utterly at variance with the standard ideas of religion and philosophy then prevalent in India.

And again and again we find the Master using in such cases the *argumentum ad hominem* ; taking, for the nonce, their own view-point ; granting, to begin with, whatever was nearest truth in their own propositions ; and from these same facts or views working round, with an intellectual skill that forms one of the most appealing features of these old-time discussions, to His own interpretation of the facts, His own rendering of the views;—to some fundamental point of His own simple and yet so wonderful Teaching ; from which, as a starting-point, it was possible for Him to expound the essence of His views on life.

All India at the time was full of just such encounters, such wayside discussions between the exponents of various views, religious and philosophical ; there were even, as has been said, women-ascetics amongst these wandering religious Teachers ; and it had become the custom for whichever of the parties was overcome in such an argument, to pass over, generally with most of his own following, into the ranks of the follower-pupils of the conqueror. One lady, indeed, whose encounter with the Teacher is recorded, had attained such skill in confounding the arguments of all who dared to oppose her, that she used proudly to set up a *broom* at the entry to the village rest-house or leafy glade where she and her following were then encamped, as a challenge to all who came to meet her in such a public war of words !

But, as has been said, so great was the Buddha's skill in these discussions that, far from entering on

the usual course of violent denial of the premises His opponent laid down, He would most often take these very premises themselves as starting-point ; and, without one hint of that bitterness and rancour which were so foreign to His nature, even before His attainment of Buddahood, He would employ His interlocutor's own phraseology and modes of thought, wherever possible, and so lead up to His own lucid Teaching. And again and again we find, at the end of His exposition, how His erstwhile opponents—marvelling at the simplicity and the obvious truth of this new Teaching ; thrilled by that overwhelming glamour of His presence—ended the exposition by falling down and saluting the Buddha; crying, in the phrase I have referred to : " Wonderful, most marvellous is it, Blessed Lord ! As if a man had overcast that which had been set up ; or had set upright that which had been overturned ; or had brought a lamp into a darkened chamber—even so has the Exalted One cast down the false, set up the True, brought light into the darkened chamber of my mind. *I go for refuge to the Exalted Lord, the Utterly-Awakened* ; *I go for refuge to His Teaching* ; *I go for refuge to the Order of His Monks* : *May the Exalted One accept me as His follower, so long as my life shall last.*"

Thus, going back to the very origins of Buddhism, do we find the first enunciations of that Formula of the Threefold Refuge which now, after so many centuries, still constitutes, after the salutation of the

Great Teacher's memory, the invariable commencement of every religious function of the Buddhist world—from the first words the little child in Buddhist lands is taught to utter, to the final ordination of the novice as a fully-constituted Member of the Monastic Brotherhood. And I propose here to examine what the Buddhist really means by the use of this Formula ;—by his solemn asseveration, thrice repeated for emphasis' sake, that he goes to the Buddha, to the Teaching, and to the Monastic Order as his Refuge and as his Guide in life.

We find an indication of some little of all that, to the understanding Buddhist, is involved in that formula in a noble passage which occurs in the *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta*, the 'Discourse of the Great Passing-Away,' the scripture, that is to say, which deals with the last few months of the Great Teacher's earthly life ; and with the death of that Personality which had been born as Prince Siddhartha. "*Be ye as Lamps unto yourselves, O Brothers,*" it runs. "*Be ye as Guides, as Refuges unto yourselves—not looking for any other Refuge. Take ye your Refuge in the Truth, not looking to any other Refuge. For whoso, surely, shall go as a Light, as a Guide and as a Refuge only unto himself; who shall go as a Refuge only unto the Truth,—not looking for any other Refuge—such of my Disciples surely shall attain, even unto the Utmost Height, if only they shall be ever willing to learn.*"

Now the word, which, in this fine passage, has been rendered as 'Truth,' is, of course, in the

original, *Dhamma*; also, and in other contexts, rendered 'The Teaching,' which constitutes the second member of this Trilogy in which the Buddhist sees his best guide or refuge. But you must understand that it means very much more than merely the teaching which the Master left to us; it means, in this connection, that mighty outpouring of spiritual force which His supreme Attainment enabled Him to bring within the reach of all humanity. The Teaching that He left behind Him is no more the Dhamma in this fundamental sense than a man's physical body is the man; it is that which, as the body for the man, temporarily enshrines, expresses, as it were, dramatises into manifestation something indefinitely more subtle; unthinkably ancient; something which is incomparably more enduring and more real.

In that same *Discourse of the Great Passing-Away* we find the Master, shortly before His demise, addressing His assembled followers: "*Do not think, O Brothers, after I am passed away, 'Our Teacher is no longer with us.' The Truth which I have taught you,* that *shall be your Teacher after I am gone;*" and so have His followers understood the matter, even to this day. When we say, 'How pleasant the Sun is,' we really mean, of course, the warmth and life and light which we feel glowing in us and about, emanated by that great luminary. Just similar is the Buddhist's concept of these two members of his Trilogy; in the Dhamma he sees the

great outpouring of spiritual power into our world, whereby the deeper regions of him live and are illumined, as the Sun's glory vitalises and illumines our physical forms ; and the focal source of that incomparable Power—as far distant from him in time albeit as the Sun is remote in space—is what he means by ' The Buddha ' unto whom he goes as his Refuge and his Guide. For the word ' Buddha,' you must remember, does not mean the personal Teacher, the Prince Siddhartha, who became a wandering ascetic, at all ; it is a *title*, not a name ; and, according to His own teaching, there have been many Buddhas who have taught our own humanity upon this earth in bygone ages ; and will be others in ages yet to come. It is true, of course, that, since we are human beings, a Buddha for us means one who, so to speak, begins as a human being ; but his Buddhahood consists not in His humanity, but rather in the fact that, through lives of incredible effort and endurance, He has attained to a spiritual evolution which renders Him as different from a human being as the Sun is different from one of its servient planets ; which makes of Him, His personality whilst it endures ; His Teaching, after that personality has passed away ; a focal centre of spiritual power no less mighty in its sphere than that of the Sun in the material realm.

And, just as we really, for the most part, mean the life and light and warmth which forthstreams from him when we speak of the Sun, so do we Buddhists mostly mean the great outpouring of spiritual force

when we refer to the Buddha as our Guide and Refuge. So, then, their unity and their difference being thus borne in mind, it will be convenient rather to consider the Power than its Source, the Dhamma rather than the Buddha, in our attempt at elucidating that in which the Buddhist takes his refuge.

Heretofore we have considered the nature and the mode of acting of that great Law of life manifested and enselfed which we term Karma, or The Doing. But it will be obvious to those who have followed what has been said as to the nature of this Karma, this Law of Life, and in particular as to its tendency to *reproduction*, that if this Karma were the *only* force involved there would be in life no possibility of progress whatsoever ;—only the ceaseless reproduction of forms and types and acts and thoughts such as had been before. Life, with Karma alone, would be the equivalent of a kaleidoscope—producing, indeed, an unthinkably vast number of variations of successive images, but rigidly bound within certain fixed limits ; and certain, if only its motion continues long enough, to reproduce again and yet again every single variation in ever-altering sequence.

Happily for us, life is *not* like that. We see, indeed, the continued reproduction, age after age, of similar types of being ; but, very clearly, there is another power at work than that of mere reproduction. Again and again, in the record of the rocks, we seem to see the alteration of the very *thought behind* the various forms of life, if one may so express

oneself. At one time, in one great group of living creatures, it is vastitude of form that seems to be the informing idea behind the changes we perceive ; at another time, amongst other groups of creatures, protective armour ; again, swiftness to escape from enemies ; and yet again, we see life issuing from its primordial home in the waters to take refuge upon land ; from earth we find it soaring into the thin air itself ; and so on with changes, always, it is true, having some fundamental connection with former types ; but yet *real* changes, which later on result in the vast divergence of form and character of the animal types which now populate our globe. When, at last, the informing principle of life achieved the human Mind, we find, as has been said before, no further attempts at altering the *form ;* but we do find differences in *intelligence* and in *moral development* amongst the different races of mankind not less great than the differences of structure amongst animals. Most notably of all, we find that amongst the most advanced races and individuals a faculty arises into manifestation which is so startlingly novel as to be actually opposed to the very fundamental principle which has so clearly and certainly dominated all previous existence—that, namely, whereas the very bed-rock of the lower life is the *survival of the fittest,* and hence the elimination of the weaker individuals, we find the more advanced and evolved races of men developing more and more of the divine principle of *Compassion*—cherishing and pre-

serving their weak and ailing members; in vivid contrast to the animal instinct which impels the herd to turn on and destroy any member that falls sick or is grievously hurt.

Thus, even in the merely material, outer, manifested world, we see the action of some Power that constantly *makes for betterment;* for advance, for improvement of life's creatures; we imply, indeed, the existence of such a Power when we speak of *Evolution* at all.

Now, the analogue of that power which thus makes for betterment, for improvement of type in the realm of material evolution, is this Dhamma, this spiritual Power which has been referred to, in the Kingdom of the Heart, of the spiritual universe within. Since we find such an uplifting power at work in the material universe, indeed, we should expect to find it in the inner, mental realm; for the one is but the manifestation of the other; or rather, perhaps, both are manifestations inseparable of one and the same thing—Life in its inmost, ultimate sense.

And this great inward spiritual power which makes for betterment, for ultimate interior perfection, is, of course, the central feature of every great religion of the world. Fundamentally, of course, like all that enters into the sphere of our comprehension, it is *experential;* it is the most real portion of the total content of the complex idea of *God* in the theistic creeds; it is the *Tao* of Lao-Tze; the *Logos* of the Neo-Platonists. Indeed, the universal ten-

dency of the human mind towards the dramatisation, the personification of ideas, has led to this power taking place in the later developments of Buddhism itself as a sort of sublimated Deity ; we find it, in some of the Northern schools, as a spiritual principle from which all the Buddhas emanated ; and again, in the *Dharmakaya* of certain Mahāyanist sects, as a principle immanent in all life ; slowly, as it were, drawing all life into ever higher stages, until at last the perfect state of Buddhahood or Arhanship is attained.

All such developments, we of the Theravāda or so-called Southern Buddhist school consider, tend in the dangerous direction of mere dogma—of doctrines that attempt to personify the utterly impersonal—to make manifest in thought that which lies ever beyond the realm of merely mental action. We prefer to follow the Great Teacher Himself in preserving *'the Noble Silence of the Wise'* concerning all such matters ; enough for us to understand that there *exists* a Power whereby we may enfranchise that droplet of Life's Ocean which we term ourselves

It is, then, this great inward Power which moves to good, which tends to selfless thought and act, albeit this may appear against our own advantage ; which manifests in the sphere of human thought and feeling as the sense of Oneness with all Life, as sympathy, Compassion, that the Buddhist has in mind when he speaks of taking his refuge in the Dhamma ; of going to the hypercosmic Truth as his Lamp and

as his Guide. Just because, in Theravāda—that is to say, in the original Buddhism—this concept is, of set intention, left so undefined—lest the dramatising tendency of our minds should lead us to attempt to personify the utterly ultra-personal—it is not easy to convey to those unacquainted with Buddhist thought the very real and very clear and vivid concept which this term Dhamma awakens in the instructed Buddhist's mind. Perhaps the best mode of representing what is meant may be found, as usual, in a physical analogy.

Heat was for a long period, in the course of the development of our modern science, regarded as a subtle fluid substance, by some held to be merely imponderable, by others—this was the celebrated Phlogiston theory, which for some time considerably retarded the then dawning growth of modern chemistry—as being not merely imponderable, but as possessing an *anti*gravitational property—as being, so to speak, a substance of negative weight. Even from very early times, however, there had not been wanting those whose insight enabled them to grasp the fact that it was fundamentally some sort of *motion* ; and Count Rumford, indeed, went so far as to give a crude experimental demonstration that work (in the case involved, the work of boring out brazen cannon) could be directly converted into heat. But it was not until the nineteenth century that our English Joule not only finally demonstrated that heat and work were interchangeable ; but yet further,

with wonderful experimental skill and in many different ways, established finally the fact that a given quantity of heat was the equivalent of a given quantity of *work*; thus establishing on sure ground the doctrine of the indestructibility of force; and also —since in all transformations of energy from one form to another more or less of the energy involved invariably appears as heat; and so, ultimately, is radiated away and lost—establishing the doctrine of the dissipation of energy as well.

That work of Joule's, by giving us the actual value of work expressed in terms of heat; or of heat expressed in terms of work; together with the vast amount of work that had already been done in chemical calorimetry, enabled the great physicists of the Victorian age to estimate, amongst other phenomena, the energy which, in the form partly of light but principally of heat, our Sun pours forth with such lavish and uninterrupted power. The result of this investigation was a surprising and very important one; for, after every known means whereby the Sun might be supposed to recuperate himself for his immense outpourings of energy were accounted for, it was clear that there existed some as yet unknown source from which that mighty expenditure must mainly come. It is only the present century which has revealed to us the nature of that hidden source of power; for in this case also, as in so many of the great scientific problems of the past, the new science of radioactivity came to the rescue; indicating

*atomic disintegration* as the principal storehouse from which our luminary draws his constant and all but incredible energy.

But, if the Sun draws his seemingly inexhaustible stores of energy from the disintegration of some minute proportion of the material atoms composing his gigantic mass, we may naturally enquire in turn from whence the atom derives this store of inward power? So far, no certain answer has been given to this question; only the fact is known that, even under the conditions prevalent on earth, certain of the elements of very great atomic weight *do* disintegrate into other elements, a certain portion of the atomic mass being in the process converted, it would seem, into energy. The fact alone is of the greatest interest; if only as establishing the fundamental unity of the old antinomy of Force and Matter. But there is one tentative explanation which has been offered, one solution which has been set forward to this problem of Whence does the atom itself draw its internal store of energy? which is of special interest to us in this present connection. That theory was set forward, I may say, from quite a different standpoint—as an attempt, in fact, to account for that peculiarity of gravitation which has been already mentioned in these lectures—that, namely, it appears to be propagated either at an infinite velocity, or at least at a velocity much higher than that of light or other etheric disturbance. The idea is that the material, three-dimensional universe,

forms a film or boundary between two regions of four-dimensional space, and that the positive electrons may be regarded as sources, through which the energy of that super-space pours into our universe ; and the negative electrons similarly may be regarded as sinks, out of which this immense and continuous stream of energy from the supernal universe pours away from our universe into the other side, so to speak, of the four-dimensional space. It is of special interest to us to note that the propounder of this theory came one step further into parallelism with the Buddhist concept of the Dhamma, the spiritual energy making for perfection, in that he definitely referred to his higher universe, his four-dimensional space, as the *Geist-welt*, the Spiritual World or Realm.

Such, then, is the nature of the Dhamma, the hypercosmic Power or Truth in which the Buddhist ' takes his refuge,'—an outpouring of spiritual energy not less, but far more real than are the light and warmth of the Sun, a Power that, it may be, acts indirectly and from far off, as it were, upon even the lower forms of life ; producing thus the constant upgrowth of even material types and forms ; but which, when we take it in its direct and highest aspect ; constitutes that force whereby we are ever, so to speak, drawn upwards out of this life in which we live, towards the State Beyond—Nirvāna, the Goal towards which all Life is slowly but surely moving.

Seeing thus the Buddha as, for us, the Source, and

the Dhamma as the Stream of regenerating and liberating Power which flows from that Source; the Buddhist, furthermore, goes to the Sangha—literally to the Order or the Community of Monks—as the third member of his Refuge-triad. Here, again, you must not suppose that the Sangha in which he takes refuge—or, as the words may equally be rendered, to whom he goes as a Guide—consists merely of the body of living men who at any given time constitute the actual Monastic Brotherhood. Indeed, the *Sangha-ratana*, or Treasure of the Order, is definitely expounded in one of the Sutras as consisting of *those who have entered the Path of Attainment* in the dispensation of our present Buddha. In other words it is the *Community of the spiritually-attained* that is involved; and thus we find that fundamentally we have the same idea in our Third Refuge as is expressed in the Christian terminology as 'the Communion of Saints.' For just as the Prince Siddhartha, by attaining Buddhahood, opened, as it were, an immense gateway into the spiritual realm; from which its mighty potencies might stream forth to the benefit of all humanity; or—to revert to our physical analogy—became, as it were, a Sun, a vast focal centre through which the forces from a higher order of universe might stream down into our lower space; so each and every person who, using His methods, has attained in the past, is now attaining, or shall attain to any degree of spiritual growth acts as a little centre of like nature; though, even in case of

the greatest, necessarily of incomparably smaller degree than that of the Source, the Buddha Himself.

But there is one other aspect of this concept of the Sangha which I would set before you; that, namely, it exhibits what is to me one of the greatest problems of all life;—how, by the mere putting-together in a particular fashion of a certain large number of units of a given order of life, we find there comes into being a single entity of an indefinitely higher order. Looking for the moment only at the material world, we see, for instance, how our own bodies consist of collections, put together in a particular fashion (a fashion, it is important to observe, which in every case involves constant internal changes) of an immense number of organisms of a vastly lower type—the living cells which compose the units of which all organised life is built up; whose putting together, in this complex and ever-changing fashion, somehow brings into being a new entity of a much higher order—ourselves. Once the Kamma, the Law of Life that determined that particular synthesis of living cells, ceases to manifest therein, the whole dies and decays. Similarly, each living cell is composed of vast numbers of highly-complex chemical compounds, proteins and others; and each of these is built up of great numbers of chemical atoms, combined and grouped in manifold highly-complex ways—again involving constant internal change; and yet again each of these chemical atoms we now regard as built up of an immense number of electrons,

electrical charges in constant motion, which electrons, still again, must be put together in some particular and ever-changing fashion to build up the great atomic complex.

Apply this concept to our idea of the *Sangha-ratana*, the Treasure of the Order in which we take our Refuge; and you will see that it may well be understood how, put together in a particular fashion by the wisdom of the Buddha, the collective entity, so to speak, formed by all these striving human hearts and minds during so many centuries; inspired by ideals so high; and living lives of such beneficence, may indeed be a spiritual entity of a far higher order than the units which compose it; a great and potent force acting for the betterment of Life; a worthy Guide and fitting Refuge for the aspiring hearts of men.

Lastly, mention has been made, during this and other essays of this series, of Nirvana, that Goal of Life towards which the Buddhist aspires, and unto which, the Master taught us, all life is surely tending; and it will be fitting if the whole series should close with some attempt to set forth the meaning Buddhists attach to that term. The literal meaning of the word is simply '*blown out*'—extinguished as is the flame of a lamp when it has been blown out; but you who have so far followed what has been said concerning it will understand how great has been the error of those who have expounded it as simply tantamount to sheer annihilation. Annihilation it is

indeed in one sense—the annihilation of Desire, of Passion, of Self-delusion. But when we come to try to expound its meaning in terms other than negative, we are met with an insurmountable difficulty; that, namely, all our positive definitions must necessarily be in terms of the life we know, in terms of human thought; and here we speak of That which is *Beyond* all Life, the very Goal towards which all Life is tending.

Perhaps the best physical analogy (it may, indeed, be something deeper than a mere analogy) to the Buddhist concept of the whole life-process may be drawn from that new science of this present century, which has so vividly illumined many another erst-while while darkened chamber of our human minds—the science of radioactivity. For that science tells us how certain of the elementary atoms are steadily changing into other atoms; losing, in the act of it, some portion of their mass, which appears in the form of an immense—an incredibly vast—outpouring of energy. Now the Buddhist view of the universe at large is exactly parallel; it teaches that life—using the term here in its restricted sense as the highest sort of life—consists of a vast number of entities; passing, indeed, from one state of life into another; but still, so far as what we may term *spiritual descent* is concerned, each the same bundle of life-forces in all these manifold manifestations. From time to time a given individual finds—either by his own unaided effort, or, more frequently by far, as the

result of following the Teaching of a Buddha—a spiritual Sun of this mental, conscious world—that inner, hidden mental Path which leads out of Life's dreaming to the Truth which lies beyond. And, just as the radio-active atom, in disintegrating, ceases, so far at least as part of it is concerned, to be matter at all; becomes, as it were, transmuted into force, thus adding to the heat or other form of energy in the material universe; so does a part, at least, of what had been a human being, pass into a different condition—or, to speak more correctly, pass beyond conditioning altogether, even as part of the physical atom passes into a non-material energy.

There are even closer parallelisms between the two concepts—when we come to examine these in detail—facts relating to the *grouping* of the transition ;—of man to Arhanship or of atom to disintegration, —into very definite stages ; and yet others relating to the time-law according to which the atomic disintegration occurs. These details, however, we must leave aside. Here it can only be said that to the instructed Buddhist, Nirvāna stands for the Ultimate, the Beyond, and the Goal of Life—a State so utterly different from this conditioned ever-changing being of the Self-dream that we know as to lie not only quite Beyond all naming and describing ; but far past even Thought itself.

And yet—and herein lies the wonder and the greatness of this Wisdom of the Aryas, won by the Greatest of the Aryans for the enfranchisement of man from

all his self-wrought bondages—this Glory utterly beyond all grasp of thought, this Peace that is the very purpose of all strife-involving being, lies nearer to us than our nearest consciousness ; even as, to him who rightly understands, it is dearer than the dearest hope that we can frame. Past all the glory of the moon and sun, still infinitely far above the starry heights of conscious being sublimated to its ultimate ; beyond the infinite abysses of that all-embracing Æther wherein these universes have their borneless home ;—illimitably far remote above the utmost altitudes where Thought, with vainly-beating wings, falls like some lost bird that had aspired till the thin air no longer could support it ;—*still* it dwells nigher than the very thought we now are thinking, nigher than the consciousness that, for the transitory moment, is all that truly can be termed ourselves.

Not through successive subtilisations of the false idea of Selfhood, then ; not through those higher States of Being which we have spoken of as the successive *Jhānas*—the States of Ecstacy—lies the Ancient Way the Teacher found ; but in the very humblest, simplest, and most intimate of all directions that the heart of man can turn and travel in. Just as the Wisdom-Being turned His back on all the glories of the world ; on all false Māra's promise of world-grasping domination ; on all the complex grandeurs of His court-life to become a beggar—humblest and lowliest of human creatures ; living in the crudest, simplest, most *immediate* way—just as He

wrought that Great Renunciation only that He might find the Way that *all* might follow to the Peace—so does the portal of the Path stand wide for all of us just only when—though it be but for a moment—*we forget our Self; and live, aspire and work for Life at large.* If we should draw, as on a chart, a diagram of Life in all its countless renderings, setting here but the dim germ-consciousness of the mineral; there the dawn of organised life in the world of flowers and plants; then the animal; then the human and self-conscious life we know; and yet beyond these those loftier altitudes of Being attained through the High Ecstasies, the *Jhānas;* the worlds of the Angels and the Gods; and, yet beyond these, the highest, holiest State whereof the Saints and Sages of old time have told—the Bodiless, Formless Ones in their highest Heaven of Pure Ideation; then, *nowhere in all that chart;* and nowhere beyond it in its own plane, could we extend it even to infinity—would lie the place that might be assigned to the abode, the dwelling of Nirvāna's Light. But, *touching* that plane everywhere, if utterly beyond it as a plane, there would extend an infinite solidity of *Height,* of Altitude. *That* would be the analogue of the Direction, of the Dwelling of Nirvāna; and—so far as we can state in words at all that all-pervading intimacy of it—that direction lies, for our own conscious life, *where there is no more Self;* just as in our analogy its Abode would be *where there is no more plane* of that conditioned chart.

And, indeed, we are told in our Teaching that it is just this very human life we now are living in which alone that high Path which leads to it may be *entered ;* though it may be *completed* (where it takes more than one life, as is said to be most usual) in the higher Heavenly Realms. It is explained that in the states of life below the human—in the animal world, the world of ghosts, and so forth—there is ever too much of suffering, too much of haunting fear for Self for the being to be able to take what we have seen is an essential step, namely, the Right Concentration of the mind. Otherwise put, there is too little *mind*, too dim a consciousness, in those lowly states of life for concentration to be possible. Whilst on the other hand, we learn, there in the Heavenly Realms, beyond the human state, so vast is the extension of consciousness in both space and time that a being born into such a life cannot grasp the Truth of Suffering ; *his own* life is so merged in ecstasy, whether of sense or of the Pure Intelligence, that he cannot understand how Suffering, how Transiency, can be true ; and—because infinitely subtler—his own conception of the Self within him is so far more potent and more real-seeming that he cannot grasp that in that utter-real-seeming Selfhood naught but Delusion dwells.

So it is *here* and *now*—not in some imagined future or in some state indefinitely higher than the human life—that, for the Buddhist, lies the Great Opportunity ; here in this human life which sometimes seems so petty and so mean and sordid ; yet which

even the high and holy Gods might envy, could they but understand !

This little human life—so short, so empty-seeming of high hopefulness—is yet the Gate of Opportunity for all the myriad beings in all Life's countless realms ; the very portal of the Path to Liberation and to Peace ! So taught the Greatest of the genius-gifted Aryan Race—He whom we love to term the Wisest, and, above all, the Most Compassionate of men. Can you wonder that we smile, then, when those who have not understood His Teaching speak of it as a gloomy pessimism ? Can you wonder that we love and reverence Him, adoring the very memory of that great Life as men of other creeds adore their holiest Gods ?

Many there are, here in these western lands to-day, to whom this old-time Wisdom of the Aryas comes—despite all the insularity of their upbringing—with a strange stirring of the deeps of consciousness ;—as if in answer to some but half-remembered Voice, echoing through the mind's dim caverns out of the gulf of immemorial years. Such, we would say, have heard and have a little understood its Message in old lives foredone ; have caught, through it, some vision of the Truth that reigns behind this darkling mystery of life ;—even, it may be, have drawn nigh, through it, to that hid Portal of the Path that leads to Liberation That this is so we know from long experience ; and, indeed, once one admits and understands the operation of the Law of Life, of Karma, it becomes clear

that some such a condition must prevail. Forever the Wheel of Life in its unceasing movement brings each creature new conditionings ; yet these are ever sequent in the ultimate ;—where the old life breaks off, there the new birth reintegrates its bye-gone state. So, since Aryan India in its great Buddhist phase stood in the forefront of the human progress then extant, we should expect that many who formed part of that great civilisation would at this time, when the centre of progress and of civilisation has shifted to the west, take birth in western lands.

For such these essays have been written :—ever in the hope that, despite their imperfections, sufficient of the spirit of Buddhism may yet shine through them to stir the sleeping memories to life once more. Through eighty generations of mankind ; through all the changing circumstances of time and racial development, that spirit, that essence of the Teaching of the Greatest of Humanity has been passed on from heart to living heart,—all-conquering. And surely the western world, amidst this present darkness of its religious life, may well find in this ancient Truth some answer to its deepest problems : some solace for the sorrows and the nescience of life ?

Selfless to live and selfless die—seeking for no reward, but only service of the greater life ; hoping for no high heaven, for no æonian bliss, but only to grow more selfless every day—such is the lesson that pervades alike the Master's life, the Master's Teaching —thereby may Peace come to all life at last !

# THE BUDDHIST DOCTRINE OF RE-BIRTH

With the one exception of the full interpretation of the doctrine of the Twelve Nidanas, otherwise known as the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, there is no single aspect of the Teachings of Buddhism which is more difficult adequately to describe than is the Buddhist Doctrine of Re-birth.

The difficulty, indeed, extends to the very title—to the words we are to select to designate and define the subject at all. The Buddha lived in a world which, instructed by the insight of the great Indian Saints and Sages of bygone days, accepted the doctrine of re-incarnation ; the teaching, that is to say, that every living being has existed for countless ages in the past ; and, with a few exceptions, would continue to exist for countless ages in the future ; passing from one form of life to the other, even as the traveller passes from inn to inn ; to dwell a little while in each. This doctrine has become familiar to western ears by reason of the great work done by the leaders of the Theosophical movement in bringing the great conceptions of the Indian Sages to Occidental lands.

But we may not properly use this term 're-incarnation' to describe the Buddha's Teaching; seeing that it implies the existence of a subtle principle, an Atman, Spirit, or Soul, which the Indian Sages taught was the veritable Self or Ego. This doctrine the Buddha altogether repudiated. The holding of this view, involved as it is in just that self-centred view of life which He regarded as the most fundamental and profound of spiritual errors, He defined as one of the first three great Bondages or Fetters of the Mind which must be broken and cast away before ever the first great step upon the Path of Spiritual Attainment could be taken.

Some insight into the difficulty which the proper presentation of the Buddhist doctrine of re-birth involves can be gathered from the fact that already, even in the course of these opening remarks, it has been necessary twice to employ the adjective 'spiritual,' even in referring to the Buddhist concept of progress towards the Goal of the Perfected Life. That word itself, of course, involves this very idea of the immortal subtle principle, the Spirit or Atman; and, because the views which have prevailed in Western lands during the period when the English language as we now have it was in process of formation, there is really no other word which conveys the idea involved, save this with all its un-Buddhistic implications. Those implications, the very derivation-meaning of the word itself, must be set aside, and it must be employed in its common colloquial sense,

that is, as involving nothing more than the concept of the interior progress towards Perfection, Saintship or Arhanship. The corresponding word most commonly employed, at least in our explanatory Commentary literature, is '*Lokuttara*,' literally meaning 'Beyond the Universe,' a term bound up in Buddhist thought with the concept of Nirvana, and relating to Path-progress only. But 'Beyond the World' or Universe, makes too clumsy and unmeaning a phrase in English for us to employ it adequately as an adjectival substitute for 'spiritual' life or progress; so that we are perforce thrown back on the more familiar native word.

It is not only in respect of words that we are faced, in this Buddhist teaching as to re-birth, with a profound difficulty. For the actual manner in which the life-wave, the complex bundle of life-forces, passes over from death to birth, is defined by the Great Teacher Himself as one of the Four '*Acinteyya*' (incapable of being thought), or Things beyond the Grasp of Thought. It is only, we are taught, the *Lokuttara Dhamma*, the Supernal Consciousness, which comes into being in the course of Path-progress; and only that when developed to its fullest extent; that is, only the consciousness of the Buddha or Arhan, can really fully understand and interiorly realise the manner of that passing-over. It is not that there is anything which might be said that is being kept secret; anything of the nature of a 'Mystery' involved. The idea is simply that full realisation of

this question of the passing-over of the life-wave is beyond the capacity of the ordinary mind of man ; it needs the fully-developed and clear-seeing consciousness which rises only when all the clouds of Nescience, *Avijja*, are swept away, actually to realise, that is to say, to live, to perceive by direct cognition, the fact and manner of the passing-over.

Now we, in our normal waking life, have no such direct and full cognition concerning any idea at all ; we only 'live,' we only 'realise' in anything approaching the full and comprehending manner which is here implied, the one fact of our own, our personal existence. And that living of an idea, that realisation which to each one of us seems so absolutely real, is itself, we are taught, the most fundamental of delusions. Could we but see it rightly we are not our *selves*, not living entities around and about which an alien universal life whirls in never-ending phantom-series ; *we are that life*, and more, far more indeed than we shall ever come to know whilst we remain immersed in this all-undermining Dream of Selfhood.

Yet, whilst we cannot at the present so highly live, so rightly see, as to reach up and seize upon this utter realisation of the dire Delusion of the Self-hood, we can yet, by dint of hard study and analysis of the elements of being, perceive that what the Buddha taught concerning its illusory nature must of necessity be a fact, even if a fact beyond our full realisation. Just so, for example, we can follow out the reasoning

involved in the Euclidian proposition that the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is invariably equal to the sum of the areas of the squares erected on the two other sides. *Realise* so great a marvel we cannot ; but we *understand* that it is somehow an invariable fact, resultant from the operation of the laws which are involved in spatial dimensionality. Similarly, whilst to obtain that full and utter realisation of the manner of the passing-over of the life-wave we must wait perforce until in future lives our minds shall be developed to their final state, perfection ; we can yet, by study of the circumstances of existence, come to the understanding of how this passing-over of the life-wave must be a fact ; and, what is more, its passing-over as a whole, as a single being, in place of undergoing a general dispersion at death. That the mind is capable of Buddhahood, of what we may aptly term *Awakening*, of passing into such a state of superior consciousness as is indicated, we are assured by the circumstance that, even now, even to the man who knows nothing of the several higher states of consciousness that are termed Jhānas in our sacred books, there are two very different states or levels of mental functioning with which we are acquainted. What this waking-state in which we now are functioning is to the dim and haunted consciousness of dreams, that is the First Jhāna to the waking state. And utterly beyond and apart and different from even the highest of the Jhāna-states lies the Supreme Awakening from

all forms of life enselfed soever. Meanwhile we are yet capable, by inference and deduction, of perceiving that the life *must* pass over, even as the Buddha taught it did.

Fundamentally, we may properly regard the difference between the old Indian (and therefore the modern Theosophical) teaching on this subject as a difference between the material or static, and the energic or dynamic views of life. In the development of language, and thus in the development of the mind of man, the noun or substantive preceded the verb; the Thing preceded the concept of the force-integration which Buddhism so long ago, and modern science in these latter days, teaches is the momentary Reality which our minds perceive as the Thing. The Universe, in the view of earth's earliest philosophers, was component of Things; they reduced things finally to certain Four Elements, together with Akasa, the Æther occupying space, as a fifth So, when the earlier Indian sages came, in their deep probing into the interior, spiritual realm, to perceive the fact of the continual passing-over of a Something from one form of life to another, and to yet another, they naturally came to define the Thing that passed over in terms similar to those which they employed concerning the material world. That world they held to be built up of those Five Elements, those underlying substrates of the manifest phenomena of life. Seeing, then, the passing over of something from life to life—a something which they perceived

was far more fundamental even than the isolated Elements wherewith it appeared to continually clothe itself, they defined it *in terms of substance.* They called it Atma, the Breath, just as they had already defined those subtle elements which they had perceived underlay the phenomena of nature in the crude terminology of the substantial elements—as Earth, Air, Fire, Water, Æther.

The physics and chemistry of even twenty years or less ago took much the same view of the material universe. They regarded it as ultimately component of some eighty odd elements. These elements they envisaged as being ultimately built up of atoms, such atoms being conceived as being small, presumably spherical, absolutely hard, and perfectly elastic, solid bodies. The difference between one sort of element and another consisted only in the different mass of its atom. But the great revolution which the study, on the one hand of the radio-active elements, and on the other of the attenuated gases in a vacuum-tube, brought about, has caused science to completely revise its view as to the ultimate constitution of matter, and hence of the universe at large. Profound investigations into the mass of the fine particles which can be studied in a Crookes-tube proved that the whole of the suppositious mass of the atom could be accounted for by the most subtle and elusive subject of study in all the scientific sphere, namely, electricity. Briefly put, the recent revolution in the scientific thought of the world consisted in a change

from a belief in *Things*, ultimate solid particles, to a belief that there were only *Forces*; and the new science of radio-activity, which saw its birth with this new century, certified and attested this new view beyond all possibility of denial when it presented to the astonished gaze of science the spectacle of a certain portion of the mass of certain chemical elements as definitely becoming *transmuted into energy* in the form of heat, light, electric charge, and so forth. Henceforth science, like Buddhism, was to regard the universe no longer from the static point of view, as built up of Substances, ultimately Things; but from the dynamic aspect, as composed of complex collocations of Energy, of Force.

Exactly parallel and in all respects, *mutatis mutandis*, similar, was the revolution which the supreme Insight of the Buddha enabled Him to effect in the views prevalent in India in His time, concerning, not the mere phenomenal universe of dead matter so-called, but concerning the world of Life, that world whereof we ourselves, our lives, our very thinking minds, are built. No longer in terms of Substance, whether gross or subtle, were the more advanced thinkers of India to look upon the life of beings; but in terms of Energy, of Force. And, just as modern science, at the time when the great work of J. J. Thompson and others was elaborating from the emptiness of the vacuum-tube the now generally-accepted electric theory of matter, was most fortunately, thanks to the work of Becquerel and the

Curies, supplied with an absolute demonstration of the truth of that theory ; so the supreme Attainment and Insight of the Buddha in the spiritual realm afforded, in the very attainment of Nirvāna itself, a demonstration of the truth of His whole teaching. For, understand, that if indeed the universe was finally component of Things, it must of necessity endure for ever ; it could never pass away, however greatly, by the permutation of its elements, it might change. That, indeed, was exactly the conclusion, the very terrible conclusion, that the ancient Indian Saints and Sages had arrived at. Terrible, because so hopeless. For, in such a view, there was no room for the great Buddhist concept of the possibility of passing altogether beyond the dire conditionings of life. The conditionings, indeed, might change profoundly. They might even, as the Indian thinkers taught, lapse, at vast intervals of time, into a state of temporary rest, temporary resolution and suspension of activity. But, sooner or later, the same dire round of life must be renewed ; sooner or later, indeed, every single momentary configuration of the universe must be repeated, and so on, to eternity.

Even here and now, the Buddha taught that which we deem 'ourselves' is merely the resultant of an immensely-complex bundle of life-forces. When we stand upon the shores of some great sea or lake, we see, far off, a wave come into our field of vision, appear to speed across the surface of the waters in one continued selfsame fluid mass, until at last it

breaks in spume and spray upon the sands at our feet. Each one of us, from the Buddhist point of view, is just such a wave upon the waters of the Ocean of Existence—the Samsāra. And, just as in reality our eyes deceive us ; just as there is in truth no one mass of water which, holding itself separate from the other waters of the sea, speeds forward to break at last upon the shore ; so is it with the wave upon the Sea of Life which we wrongly deem to be our very self. Modern physics has taught us that our sense of sight here, as in so many other cases, deceives us when we try to accept its message as the literal fact of things. It shows us that there is no mass of water held together by some unimaginable force. The true wave exists, indeed, not as a mass of water, as a particular grouping of substance, but as a bundle of forces. Every inch, nay, every millionth of an inch, or millionth millionth, how small soever you may make the subdivision, the mass of water in the wave is different. Every second, every million-millionth of a second, old particles of water that once formed the wave are leaving it ; new particles are entering in and becoming for some space of time a part of its eternal flux. What, then, is the Wave itself ? The putting-together, physics teaches us, of a bundle of complex forces in a particular way. If you go to the advanced physicist and ask him what is the reality behind this continual flux of motion he will write you a Fourier-series on the blackboard, an equation of *dx* upon *dy*. *dz* to zero—*nothingness*.

So with this Self-life we are so sure about, this immensely-complex wave in life's great ocean that we term our self. A complex of thought-moments, looked at in Time ; a complex of forces, elements, Sankhārās ; perhaps we might here say *Tendencies*, if you regard it from the mental aspect ; a collocation of energies that, had we the sublime mathematic that would meet the case, we might write down as a Fourier-series—a *dx* upon *dy. dz.* that is equal to *nothingness.* Such is the final resolution of the equation of our being, so far as a ' Self ' is concerned. And the working-out of this tremendous formula is nothing less than the fulfilment of the very purpose of our lives ; the attaining to Arhanship, to final perfection.

Now, as we watch our wave in its travelling, at any one point of space and time we see either a trough, or a crest, or some other portion of the wave that lies between the trough and crest. The crest is the analogue of the full manifestation in matter, of the prime of life and powers of the being ; the depth of the trough is the analogue of the moment of death ; the moment, mark well, when the whole sense and direction of the motion changes ; and, to a being watching the dying wave that could only sense motion in the one direction, it would appear that at the depth of any given trough the wave had *ceased to be.* That, of course, is because the sight or understanding of such being is confined to that locality in space. So it comes about that to an observer, confined as we

are to one position at any given instant of time, the life-wave of a dying man, for example, appears simply to have vanished. Note here that had our being, however, possessed a knowledge of higher mathematics ; had he been able to observe the whole course of the wave that preceded that apparent disappearance, and to measure and so deduce its formula, he would have arrived at just that Fourier-series equation we have mentioned. He would know that, although his senses might not be able to follow the wave beyond the moment of its deepest plunge, yet it *must,* as a mathematical necessity, continue to exist. To put it simply. Force is indestructible. Life, the life of a reasoning being, is an obvious and highly-complex collocation of forces. Therefore life is indestructible, always supposing that we cannot bring about the final equation of all that complex of opposing forces to Zero—nothingness. In our simile, that equation may be regarded as very crudely effected by the final breaking of the wave upon the shore. Indeed, this happens to be one of the most common images which are employed in our Buddhist books for the attainment of Nirvāna, or Arahanship or Sainthood. The breaking of the wave upon Life's Further Shore, that is our ancient simile

To those who have carefully followed what has been said concerning the motion and the varying phases of the wave, it will be clear why the life of any given being should of necessity pass over as *one* thing, in place of being merely dispersed into the universe at

large. The reason with the wave is that it is one wave. The reason with the life is that it is one life, by virtue of just that self-delusion which brings the conscious mind to look upon itself as one thing apart from life's great whole. The force, in other words, that holds together all this bundle of mental forces, is the Delusion of the Selfhood ; the fact that, with the great majority of our acts of consciousness, the thought of 'I' and 'Mine' creep in. Cease to think 'I' and 'Mine,' taught the Buddha, and in no long while the old self-forces will resolve themselves into the Zero they equate ; the wave will break upon Life's Further Shore. To vary our analogy, consider an atom of some element. This consists of a complex bundle of forces, of masses of negative electricity, now called electrons, revolving around, or in, an exactly equal and opposite mass of positive electricity. Just as with the Fourier-series representing the wave, the final equation of the forces of the atom is Zero, nothingness ; for we may regard the negative and positive electricities pictorially as, say, right and left-handed twists in the world of force we term the Æther. If we could resolve the atom, bring negative and positive together, then, where that atom was, would be only free untrammelled space. We may, similarly, look upon the life of a human being as a complex of Kamma-elements ; some being inherently a twist of the one underlying Life in one direction, those we term 'Evil' Sankharas, or life-elements ; others

inherently a twist of the one Life in the opposite sense (just as we may regard the negative and positive masses of electricity as being twists in the immaterial æther), these we call Kusala-Kammas, they are Sankhārās tending to states of happiness, as the 'Evil' Kammas tend to the production of states of pain, suffering, disharmony. The force that binds the atom together is the attraction between the opposite electricities, and their mutual disposition. The force that brings the living sentient being together is the attraction of these life-elements, their illusory and yet all-potent disposition as an imaginary 'Self,'—a being set apart and out of contact with the All of Life. The resolution of the being, the solution of the equation of the Fourier-series which is the mathematical expression of our life, lies in the equation of these opposing groups of Kamma-elements; hence, in practice, in the Renunciation of Self.

Another very difficult problem in respect of this Buddhist teaching of re-birth lies in the difficulty, at first sight, of understanding how the single consciousness which prevails at the moment of the death of a human being, can give rise to, and indeed, in a sense, hold in itself *in posse*, the immensely-complex character which constitutes a cultured man. We can gain an insight into that difficulty by considering what is known of the purely material side of life. All organised life with which we are acquainted, our own no less than that of the humblest

living thing, is represented at one point of its life-cycle by a single cell. That cell divides into two, each of these into other two, and so on in sequence, until the whole organism is built up. That point, which with us human beings comes when we reach full maturity, when growth ceases and the number of cells remains the same or dwindles; this corresponds, in the wave-simile, with the moment of the attainment of the crest of the wave. Thereafter there is no addition to the mass of particles of water, but only a diminution.

Another difficult problem is the connection of re-birth with hereditary transmission of character At first sight, especially in consideration of the immense complexity of human character in any highly-civilised race, it seems almost impossible that, at the precise instant when a given man dies, there should exist (supposing here that his Kamma is such as would make him be re-born in the human world—perhaps a not very usual circumstance) somewhere on this earth a newly-fertilised ovum, capable of adequately rendering all the complex details of that particular being's character. This difficulty, however, vanishes when we remember the Oneness of Life. If we are looking at some great complex mechanism, we may find, after long and careful study of it, that whenever a given wheel or lever in one part of the machine is moving in a particular way, there is invariably a certain other sort of definite movement on the part of some other

wheel or lever in an entirely different, and perhaps widely-distant, portion of the mechanism. The coincidence occurs because the machine is *one* machine ; it is the necessary outcome of its essential unity. Just so it must come about, in the great mechanism of Life, that at whatever moment of time there occurs the death of a particular being, then, in some other portion of that same world-system, there will be the means of its re-expression just come to readiness for it.

" *'Na ca So ; na ca Aññho,'* that was the great formula in which the Buddha represented and summed up the central fact concerning this question of re-birth. *'It is not He, nor is it Another,"* the being which is reborn is not the being that died, in the sense that no single particle, perhaps, of their bodies are the same. But it is not Another than he, because every element of force which went to " his " make-up is there, manifest or potential. Just so the chrysalis is not the caterpillar ; nor is the full imago, the butterfly or moth, the chrysalis That we see is true, although in this case there is a considerable amount of community of material in the successive stages. Like a flame lighted from a dying lamp, is the old simile for the passing-over of the life from death to birth Modern science furnishes us with a far more definite and exact illustration. Let us suppose that here we have a wireless telegraphy or telephone set which is exactly syntonised or " tuned " to one very definite wave-length

in the Æther. Then, all around, there may be receiving sets, suitably disposed to receive the message we are sending, but out of a hundred, or a million, only that system will be thrilled to operation by the message we are pouring forth upon the æther which is in exact syntony ;—is capable, that is to say, of itself responding to the particular wave-length of our sending. So, when John Smith dies, there may be any number of human fertile cells capable of being vitalised, or thrilled to life, by the impact of the subtle and mysterious life-wave cast off in his dying consciousness, but only that one of them all will so be thrilled to life which has the sort of physical heredity capable of carrying of the John Smith heritage. And, because of the Oneness of the life in any given world-system, there will always be one just ready, but never more than one.

Buddhism, of course, does not confine re-birth to merely such levels of life as we can see with our eyes, the animal and the human. There are, we are taught, in all six great levels or planes of being in any given world-system. In any of the six, according to his deserts, the being that dies may be reborn. Below the Human World there come the Animal, there are the Astral, and the States of Suffering, or "Hells"; above these come the 'Heavens' of Sense and the 'Formless Heavens,' or Worlds of Pure Intellection. Through this series, now going up, now down, the being wanders on, until at last he finds the truth concerning all this life of self-striving

and of self-endeavours ; until he learns to cast forth the dire Delusion of the Self, and so at last the life-wave that so long has travelled over the Ocean of Existence finds its great Goal, and breaks upon Life's Further Shore.

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